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Kids Love Computers

But Are They Really Learning?

See page 4

NEA Today

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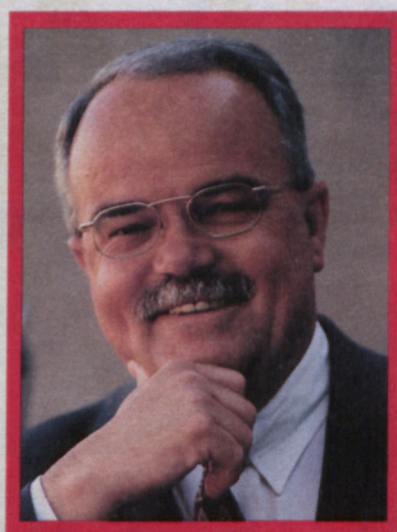
Does This Election Matter?

President's Viewpoint



Joe Di Dio

Bob Chase

After the last speech is given, the last television ad aired, what really is left of a political campaign? Usually one very fundamental idea over which the candidates disagree, fundamentally.

Politicians sometimes highlight the difference between themselves and their opponents. Other times, they blur the difference because they aren't confident the public will accept their idea. Franklin Roosevelt did this in 1932. He thought the federal government should intervene in the depression-wracked economy. Roosevelt campaigned, however, on the politically safer idea of balancing the budget.

By 1936 Roosevelt had no qualms about running on the idea of an activist federal government. And this year, we see the Congressional class of '94, which stormed into office talking about orphanages and cutting the school lunch program, toning down its extreme positions.

What about campaign 1996—where's the great intellectual divide?

I think, for the first time in our history, it is over education.

On one side are politicians who believe public education is a failing monopoly that needs a good healthy dose of market-style competition. On the other side, are those of us who believe our public schools are doing well under difficult circumstances, but must improve by putting "the public" back into public education.

Milton Friedman's name will not appear on a single ballot this election day, yet it is his idea that Americans will be voting on.

For more than 30 years, this Nobel-prize winning economist has been arguing for a transition from what he calls "government schools" to a market system of education.

It's a truly radical idea, running counter to Thomas Jefferson's idea that providing "common schools" for the children of all classes is one of government's loftiest functions. Friedman sees parents and students as consumers in a marketplace; Jefferson saw them as citizens in a community.

The Friedmanites seek to abolish federal aid to education and the Department of Education—"they only serve to prop up the government school monopoly."

Also, the Friedmanites are big supporters of vouchers—government pays consumers to send their children to private schools—although Friedman reminds his followers that vouchers are not an end in themselves, but a means of marketizing education.

The Jeffersonians oppose vouchers for three reasons: 1) They will punch a gaping hole in the constitutional wall separating church and state, a wall that has served us well for over two centuries. 2) Vouchers will provide taxpayer money to well-to-do people who are already sending their children to private schools. And 3) Vouchers will siphon funds away from public schools, "helping" a few at the expense of many.

The Jeffersonians are convinced that public schools that are failing need more community, not more competition.

There is an ironic twist in this battle of ideas. Friedman, unlike many other conservatives, is deeply concerned about growing income inequality in our country. He has written: "Such stratification is a recipe for social disaster." Which is exactly what Jefferson warned us about.

Only Friedman thinks public schools have contributed to this stratification, while Jeffersonians see public education as the great equalizer.

The Jeffersonian idea has withstood the test of time, and I believe it will prevail again. But even if it does, that still leaves the Jeffersonians with a serious problem.

There are some big city school systems, such as the one in our nation's capital, that are failing many children. It took years of racism, public apathy, and political corruption to make such systems the failure they are today. To turn them around will require enormous effort—and time.

What do the Jeffersonians have to offer the inner-city parent desperately concerned—and rightly so—about her child's education right now, today?

We've an awful lot of work to do after November 5.

NEA at a Glance

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Did You Know?

Since the release of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983, the National Education Association has spent more than $70 million on school reform efforts—including NEA's Mastery in Learning project, NEA's Learning Lab initiative, donations to NEA's foundation—the National Foundation for the Improvement of Education—and other programs. Most of the money has been aimed at helping to improve teaching practice.

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NEA Today this Month

Election Day

In 1850, one vote admitted California and Oregon to the union. In 1960, one vote per precinct won John Kennedy the Presidency over Richard Nixon. On November 5, 1996, one vote could decide who's elected to your school board, who will represent you in Congress, and who will lead this country into the next century. That vote could be yours. Use it—and keep that flag flying.

Cover Story

4 Kids Love Computers
But are they really learning? Some critics say cramming schools with computers just wastes taxpayer dollars. NEA members in one innovative urban school beg to differ. At Maxwell Middle School in Tucson, Arizona, educators are eager to talk about how they teach their 600 students using 423 computers. Tim Garner is one Maxwell student having fun—and learning.

Cover photo by Don Stevenson

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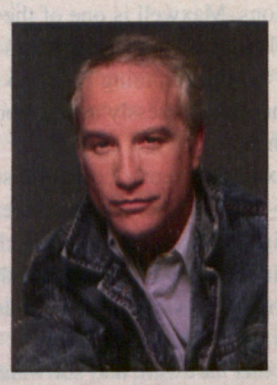

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Techno Hy

Some critics say cramming schools with computers just wastes taxpayer dollars. NEA members in one innovative urban school beg to differ.

"What's wrong with education cannot be fixed with technology," says Apple Computer founder Steve Jobs. "Lincoln did not have a Web site at the log cabin where his parents home schooled him."

Critics of public education like Jobs want public tax dollars spent on private school tuition. They consider any moves to place computers into public school classrooms as distractions from the task at hand. But even some thoughtful supporters of public education, like New York University's Neil Postman, feel computers are incredibly overhyped.

Are they right? Can computing and new technology really help kids learn? Or is all this talk about classrooms and cyberspace just another educational fad?

At Maxwell Middle School in Tucson, Arizona, you'll find plenty of NEA members eager to answer these questions. Maxwell is one of the few schools in America where "classroom" and "computing" now go together as seamlessly as blackboard and chalk.

Maxwell currently hosts 600 students—and 423 computers. Seventh and eighth grade classrooms each contain some 20 PCs, networked with a full range of workplace and educational software.

All this hardware and software is now built into Maxwell's staff-driven curriculum—heavy on reading and writing, thematic instruction, and cooperative learning—and the results are impressive. In the 1995-96 school year, Maxwell seventh graders—of all abilities—registered an impressive four-year boost in their Iowa Test scores, averaging 8 percent gains in English, 10 percent in reading, and 12 percent in math.

"If we don't make learning relevant to kids, we'll lose them," notes seventh grade language arts teacher Lynda Cesare. "There are too many other things going on in their lives. We show them that they have the skills to keep on moving, to be lifelong learners."

"Computers help enhance what students learn in class—reading, writing, math, and so on—and enable them to see the bigger picture quickly, how it all fits together," adds seventh grade social studies teacher Brandon Hall.

How exactly does classroom computing make a difference? The new technology, Maxwell teachers agree, helps:

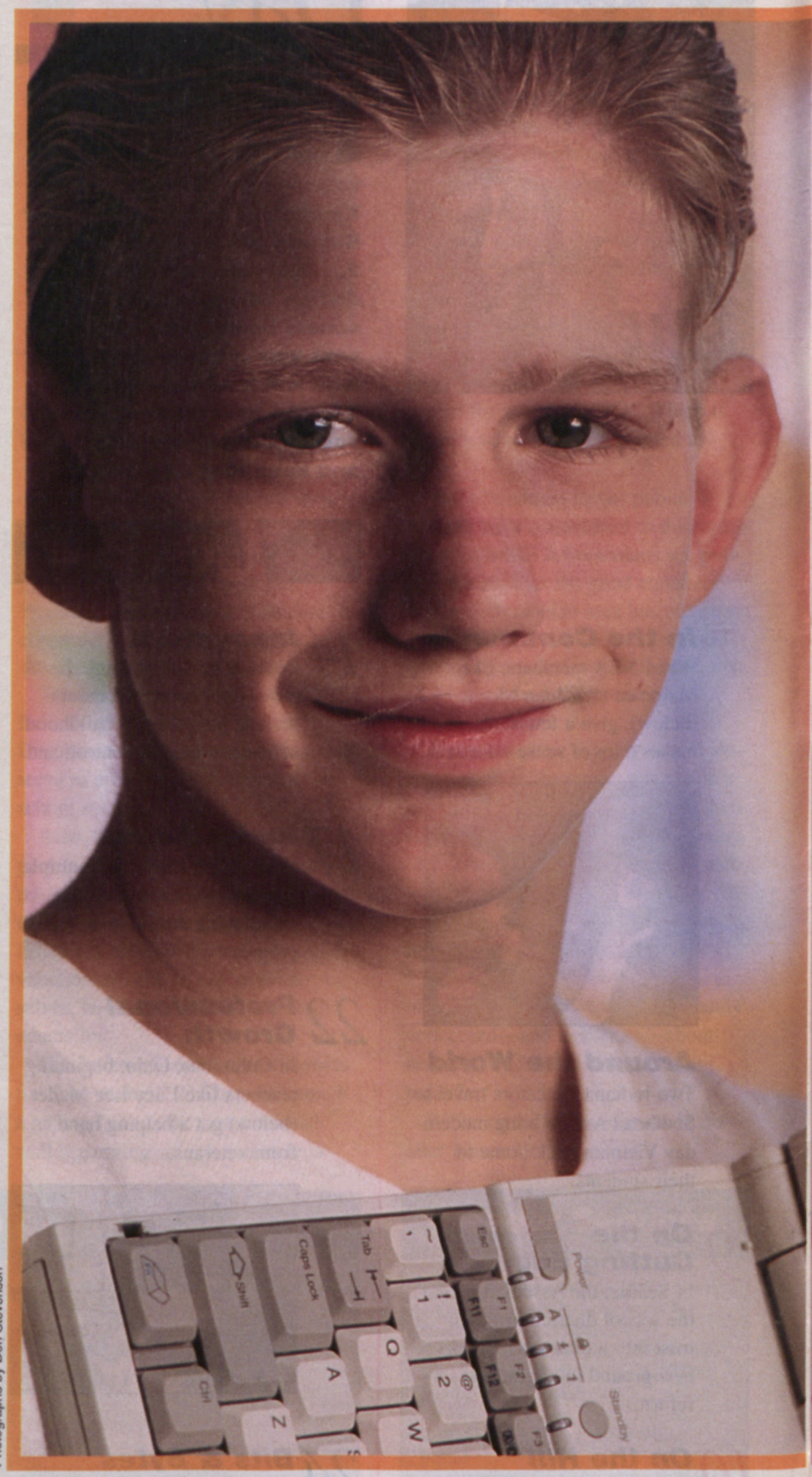
Assemble the pieces. Seventh and eighth grade teams at Maxwell—each led by a math, language arts, social studies, and science teacher—often collaborate on themes, assign students "jobs," and then put together a product through technology.

In one recent project, students created a "conflict resolution package" to "sell" to nations like Israel and Bosnia. In the process, they used computers to research each country's economy and political scene, create statistical spread sheets and graphs, and create a multimedia marketing presentation.

Foster teamwork. With computers, cooperation is contagious. When she's in the Mac lab, sixth grader Eliana Diaz calls out, "Anybody need help?" and flits around the room to assist other kids, sometimes almost bumping them out of their seats. In science class, a seventh grade gang member pulls up a chair to help other kids learn the PowerPoint presentation program.

Build self-confidence. The computer lets students quickly revise their work, making them "feel more confident that they can make a mistake and erase it easily," says special education teacher Susan Oyler. "That builds self-esteem—it's a real ego booster."

"Kids who know a little about computers, but aren't in gangs or sports, have a lot of status," adds seventh grade science teacher Tom Kaigler. "They're seen as valuable people."



Photographs by Don Stevenson

Help bilingual kids learn. When English as a Second Language student Carmen Verdugo started at Maxwell, she was "petrified," notes Lynda Cesare. "But the technology gave her confidence in her skills, and now she's really proficient in English."

Verdugo herself says that it's "due to computers that I've improved in spelling, English, pronunciation, and math."

Get students organized. "Students are really into machines!" emphasizes sixth grade language arts teacher Jan Dungan, and they "stick to task a lot longer on computer, as opposed to pencil and paper.

pe—or Help?

Maxwell Middle School students like Brian Sheridan, left, are using real-life workplace software, stress NEA members David Goodkin (top photo, right) and Lynda Cesare (below, with student Tim Garner). Says Cesare: "Our goal is to give kids self-confidence and skills they can tap into for the future."

"Students also become more independent learners with resources like the spell checker at their fingertips," Dungan adds. "They don't need to run to teachers as much. These computer applications organize their thought processes."

Explains eighth grader Brian Sheridan: "You have to know what you're doing and think ahead—if you push a button, will it kill the system or help you?"

Broaden horizons. Maxwell staff used to rely on Title 1 funding to take disadvantaged students on field trips to San Diego. Tight budget times make frequent field trips difficult to arrange. But, through the Internet, computers can move students far beyond classroom walls.

Eighth grade history teacher Steve Andre is planning a unit on the Holocaust and "working with a local rabbi to get E-mail pen pals in Israel for my students." Students in John Moritz's class have found four business sponsors for their upcoming school Web site—"Maxwell.org"—providing the school with its own domain on the Internet.

Prepare students for the hi-tech workplace. Seventh grade science teacher David Goodkin's students "are using the same software program to make presentations as my father, who works at Hughes Aircraft." These kids, he insists, "are at least as proficient as most business office staff in knowing where to go for information and how to find things."

"Some of the kids I taught last year wouldn't make it in a traditional pen-and-pencil school setting," adds Steve Andre, who left behind the business world for a second career in teaching. "But now they can go to the bounds of their imagination and have pride in a finished product. The potential is just phenomenal."

Realizing that potential is, of course, never easy. At Maxwell, for instance, too many computers are awaiting repair, and that can create aggravating delays.

But thousands of other schools would love to face these sort of repair problems. Most schools aren't repairing computers because they don't have many to begin with.

Nor do most schools have enough resources to access the Internet or offer faculty the training they need to make computers more than expensive doorstops.

Maxwell owes its computing infrastructure, which began taking serious shape in 1992, to partnerships—still ongoing—with two companies, Microsoft and Compaq. Both have contributed significant products and services to the school.

Additional support has come through a $40 million district-wide technology bond issue, Title 1 and desegregation funding (allowing smaller classes), and a state technology grant for interactive television—to be spent this year.

Without this combined effort, few of the students at Maxwell would have any computing in their lives. Some 83 percent of the students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch.

"If my students couldn't use technology at school, they'd probably never touch a computer," points out John Moritz, a seventh grade science teacher.

But they are touching computers, and that interaction, notes Tucson Education Association President Frieda Baker, is "helping at-risk kids work their way out of less-than-desirable situations and fulfill their hopes."

Making sure all kids get this opportunity, in all communities, is the challenge America now faces.

—Dave Winans

What's Your Story?

Tucson's Maxwell Middle School is just one site where classroom computing is helping kids learn. At Peakview Elementary in Aurora, Colorado, technology has been successfully incorporated to enhance the curriculum (see "Bits & Bytes," page 24).

Is technology making a positive difference in your school? Better grades, higher test scores—what evidence do you have that technology can make a difference?

E-mail your school's story to NEAToday@aol.com. Or fax it to *NEA Today* at 202/822-7206.

What will it take to create techno success stories in schools across the United States? Turn the page and see.

A Historic Opportunity

Classrooms have been waiting 62 years for affordable phone service. The next few months will decide how many years we wait for affordable Internet access.

Only 9 percent of U.S. classrooms, libraries, and computer labs now have access to the Internet, the computer network of networks that links computer users around the world.

Will classroom Internet connections remain as rare as classroom telephones? *NEA Today* asked Barbara Yentzer, the director of NEA's Center for Education Technology, and NEA lobbyist Carolyn Breedlove.

Q: Why do so few schools today have classroom telephone connections, let alone Internet connections?

Yentzer: Schools were never mentioned in the 1934 Federal Communications Act, which guaranteed universal telephone service—at affordable rates—to citizens in their homes. So schools ended up having to pay business rates for phones, and few could afford them for classroom use.

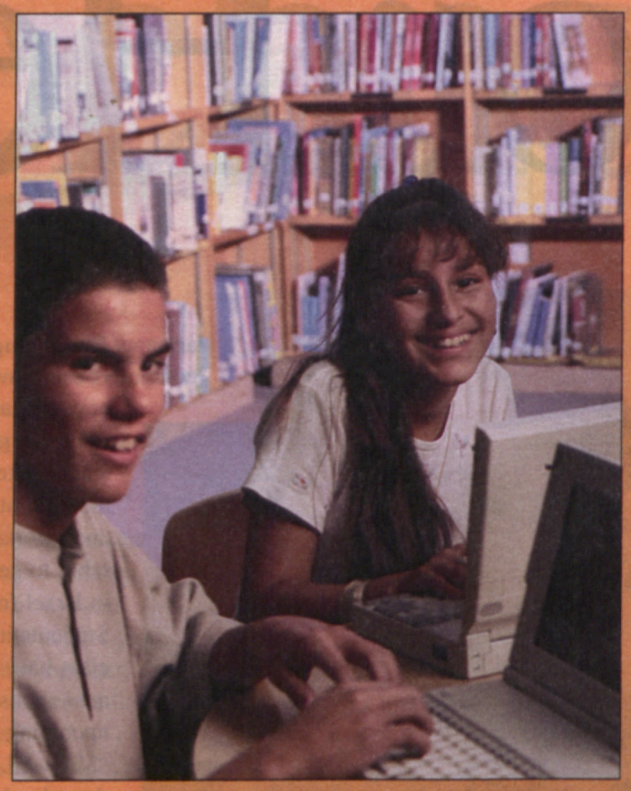
This has become an even bigger problem over the past few years, as schools have tried to provide students access to the Internet via the phone lines. Schools have had to limit the use of Internet tools because of the cost.

Q: Will the new federal Telecomunications Act passed last February make any difference?

Yentzer: It could. Thanks to lobbying by NEA and our allies, the new Telecommunications Act of 1996 mandates that all schools and libraries have access to advanced telecommunications services at affordable, discounted rates.

The law requires that the Federal Communications Commission and each state's Public Utilities Commission or Public Service Commission determine which services must be provided to schools and libraries and at what discounted rates.

This requirement offers us a real window of opportunity. If we don't take advantage of this opportunity, we may have to go another 62 years without affordable telecommuncations for America's schools.



Number of public school students per computer in 1983:	125
Number of public school students per computer in 1995:	9
Number of students per modern multimedia computer:	35
Percentage of schools in poor communities connected to the Internet (1995):	31
Percentage of schools in wealthy communities connected to the Internet (1995):	62
Percentage of secondary schools with access to the Internet:	65
Percentage of elementary schools with access to the Internet:	46
Percentage of teachers with little or no experience with classroom technology:	50

Sources: *Rand Corporation, U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics*

Q: What can NEA members do to help realize the potential of the new Telecommunications Act?

Yentzer: I'd urge NEA members to make your voice heard as the FCC sets the statute's framework and ground rules [see FCC Web site address below]. Share real-life teaching experiences with state utility commissioners, who don't understand schools or interact with school people. Don't try to be a telecommunications expert. Just articulate to regulators the work of teachers and students and how affordable access could make a difference.

Breedlove: Educators need to explain to state regulators what a school district budget looks like. Policy-makers tend to think there's "flexible" money available for technology, when there's not.

Q: What else can members do?

Breedlove: Contact your local librarians, school boards, and administrators. Get in a coalition with these people.

NEA is doing this nationally through the Education and Library Networks Coalition [see Web site address below], which includes 32 organizations, ranging from the National School Boards Association and American Library Association to the Grange and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

Resources

Affordable Access Ammo

Want to join the campaign to make sure that all schools gain affordable access to the Internet?

- For a complete action kit to help implement the affordable access provision of the new Telecommunications Act, point your Web browser to the Education and Library Networks Coalition site at http://itc.org/edlinc.
- For more details on the Telecommunications Act of 1996, go to the Federal Communications Commission's Web site at http://www.fcc.gov/telecom.html.
- For more information on FCC proceedings, see the Benton Foundation Communications Policy Project page at http://www.benton.org/cpphome.html.

Education Technology Sources

- Start your exploring at NEA's Teaching, Learning & Technology site on the World Wide Web. You'll find here a wealth of information and opportunities for dialogue maintained by the NEA Center for Education Technology (http://www.nea.org/cet/).
- Check in with 21st Century Teachers, a network of pioneers aiming to help their teaching colleagues use technology to enhance education (http://www.21ct.org).
- Download "KickStart Initiative: Connecting America's Communities to the Information Superhighway," a report produced by the U.S. National Information Advisory Council (http://www.benton.org/KickStart/kick.home.html).
- Consult "Improving Student Performance Through Learning Technologies," a policy statement released by the Council of Chief State School Officers (http://www.ccsso.org/techpol.htm).
- Contact Tech Corps, a national nonprofit organization working to recruit volunteers from the technology industry to help schools (http://www.ustc.org).
- Read "Computing Our Way to Educational Reform," *The American Prospect*, July-August 1996. (The American Prospect, Inc., P.O. Box 383080, Cambridge, MA 02238. Subscription: $25 a year.)
- Check out "infoActive," the newsletter of the Center for Media Education (1511 K St., NW, Washington, DC 20005 and http://www.cme.org/cme). The fall 1996 issue spotlights the struggle for "The Little wiRed Schoolhouse."
- Take a look at "Upgrading School Technology," *Education Week*, May 1, 1996.

In the Community

Change for the Children

NEA members raise funds to aid disadvantaged students and their families.

It's an unheralded fact of school life that "all of us have seen students in need and have dug into our own pockets to help them," says Joan Morin, an educational technician in Augusta, Maine.

Morin and her local, the Augusta Education Association, have taken this generosity a step further. They've organized $ense for Kids, a fund that lets members pool their money to help students.

Education employees contribute to this fund by designating the odd change from their paycheck to a special account at the Maine Education Association credit union.

With the added backing of local businesses, $ense for Kids gave out small grants totalling $5,000 last year in Augusta—for everything from winter clothes and eyeglasses to groceries and school materials.

Take this concept yet another step and you've got the Children's Funds maintained by NEA state affiliates in Connecticut, Idaho, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Missouri, Nebraska, North Carolina, Oregon, Rhode Island, Utah, and Washington.

The funds' purpose is simple. "Personal needs should never be allowed to interfere with a student's ability to complete his or her education," stresses Lee Ann Prielipp, vice president of the Washington Education Association.

Simple, too, are fund rules: Any Association member may apply for grants to help the needy, there is no red tape, and assistance is immediate and confidential.

"We entertain any request," says Denise Felice, president of the 11-year-old NEA Rhode Island Children's Fund. "If school employees see a crying need, that's our guide. And we deliver assistance within 48 hours."

The fund also delivers dignity.

"We never march into a needy child's classroom," Felice emphasizes. "I'll jot down everything a kid needs, get it to the school nurse, and find a way to get the child to the nurse.

Andy Molloy

Maine school employee Joan Morin uses money from the $ense for Kids fund to buy some new clothes for Faith Doherty, 6, whose home burned down.

"If we send over a new winter coat, we'll pull the tags off and hang it in the child's locker," she adds. "And when we help pay students' way to the prom—for their self-esteem and peer recognition—we always tell them they won a gift certificate."

The NEARI fund—built through United Way and payroll deductions, annual fundraisers, and memorial donations—made almost $100,000 available to members last year for everything from taking a child on a needed shopping trip to helping whole families in distress.

The opportunity to help brings out the best in NEARI members like Evelyn Corey, a Middletown resident, who used funds to help a stranded immigrant family by stocking their freezer and taking the kids on outings.

And there's North Kingstown school support staffer Sandi Blankenship, who got motorcycle club members to donate Christmas presents to the fund's well-publicized "Gingerbread Express" delivery runs to low-income schools.

"Ask anyone in the state, and they know the NEARI Children's Fund," notes Felice. "Even people who don't like unions like the fund, because we don't grandstand."

Projects like the state Children's Funds and Augusta's $ense for Kids "let the community feel a lot better about education and unionism," concludes Joan Morin.

"People don't look at us as just trying to get raises anymore. They see the amount of work we put into helping these kids."

A fund for needy children is "doable in any size NEA affiliate. It doesn't take a mountain of money," stresses Felice. "But you need to set guidelines according to your resources—to control its growth."

For more information about starting a fund, contact Denise Felice at NEARI Children's Fund, 99 Bald Hill Rd., Cranston, RI 02920-2631. Call 401/463-9630 or FAX 401/463-5337.

Heroes & Zeroes

Denver teacher and NEA member Todd Andres just goes with the flow. Specifically the flow of frigid Clear Creek in Colorado, where he risked life and limb to rescue a family of four whose van had crashed into the creek. We think he's a hero, but he modestly brooks no praise.

A life sentence to House Majority Leader Dick Armey (R-Texas) for a few sentences most law-abiding worms would find unworthy. When the 270,000-member Fraternal Order of Police endorsed President Clinton's re-election bid, Armey called them a "mob of union members. . .dressed up like policemen."

Talk about energetic supporters. For years, Ashland Inc., a worldwide energy company, has used radio and TV ads to praise teachers and support dropout prevention and school-to-work programs. Called "a model for the corporate community" by former NEA President Keith Geiger, Ashland recently received a special NEA Champion of Education Award.

Rep. Elton Gallegly (R-Calif.) is a bit confused about what teaching is all about. He tried to add language to an immigration bill that would have barred children of illegal immigrants from public schools, effectively turning educators into deportation officers. Gallegly's idea was dropped from the final bill.

"The check's in the mail" isn't good enough for California NEA member Lois Rentsch, who over the last 15 years has financially sponsored more than 30 Native American children through Save the Children. During her summers, Rentsch travels to meet with and sometimes counsel the kids she's sponsored.

Around the World

You Don't Toil Alone
When school employees unify, they're the strongest voice kids will ever have. Why? Worldwide, education organizations employ over 55 million workers.

Good Idea...from Canada
The Quebec Employers Council and CEQ—Quebec's largest education union—have agreed to toughen rules covering working students under 16. This voluntary code limits students to two hours of work during school days, bans employment between 9 p.m. and 6 a.m., and prohibits part-time work for children under 13.

Minding Our Own
In Fiscal Year 1996, the United States dropped to fourth place in total dollars spent internationally on development and humanitarian aid. Of 21 industrialized nations, the U.S. spent the smallest amount proportional to its wealth. In the proposed 1997 budget, the United States will spend $12 billion for overseas assistance—and $276.7 billion on the military.

U.N. and U.S.: Smart
United States leadership in the United Nations is a smart investment for a safe and just world. This is one of the conclusions of a new brochure, *What Every American Should Know About the United Nations,* co-published by the United Nations Association and NEA, and available by calling 212/907-1340.

At the Top
Canada ranks first among G-7 nations in the percent of its gross domestic product—about 7 percent—spent on education, including higher education. Latest figures from the National Center for Education Statistics show the United States third, behind the United Kingdom.

Jim Young

Jon and Pat Theobald spent three weeks this summer in Vietnam. They are among the few Americans to visit the Southeast Asian nation since the Vietnam War ended 20 years ago.

Vietnam Now: Lessons To Learn

This fall, Indiana NEA members Jon and Pat Theobald brought modern-day Vietnam back home to their students.

The guns went silent in Vietnam more than 20 years ago, and the Southeast Asian nation closed its doors to most of the Western world. Today, two teachers, Pat and Jon Theobald, are opening those doors to their students.

Jon, an economics teacher at Plainfield High School in Indiana, was in Vietnam from 1963-64 as an Air Force advisor and instructor. Though he often wanted to go back, politics kept him out.

But this summer, Jon got his chance.

Warming relations between Vietnam and the United States allowed Jon and his wife Pat, a French teacher at Perry Meridian High School, to study there for three weeks, funded by grants from the Lilly Endowment.

Using videos, music, and pictures from their travels, the couple is now putting together a multimedia exhibit to inspire people to learn more about Vietnam. Visitors will be able to explore the exhibit and ask questions.

"I have so many videos, and I have Vietnamese folktales translated into French," says Pat Theobald. "I want to expose my students to another part of the French-speaking world.

"The war was so horrible," Theobald adds, "that it would be good to finally focus on the positive aspects of Vietnamese culture."

The Theobalds spoke to many Vietnamese teachers during their stay, most of whom were friendly and easily volunteered information.

Other teachers were afraid to be videotaped. As late as 1990, any Vietnamese seen talking to a foreigner could be arrested and interrogated.

The grants also gave the Theobalds an opportunity to research their own particular interests.

Jon Theobald examined the effects of Vietnam's transition to a market economy.

Pat Theobald researched the continuing presence of French culture in the former French colony.

"I found that there's about a 20-year generation gap among French-speakers, because French wasn't allowed for so long," says Pat Theobald. "But the French have started schools there so that Vietnamese will be able to earn French diplomas. That will make them eligible to attend universities in France."

"I discovered that the biggest problem there now is the legal apparatus," explains Jon Theobald about his studies.

"The government tries to manage everything. When it comes to investment, the big winner so far is the government."

This won't be the Theobalds' last trip to Vietnam. They hope to go back eventually as English teachers. The pay is only about $4 an hour, but they don't mind. The doors to Southeast Asia are now officially open.

—Dax Oliver

The Bottom Line

Americans are misinformed about their public schools, says the latest Phi Delta Kappa poll. Nearly two-thirds believe that dropout rates have increased over the last 25 years. The reverse is true. Only 7 percent of Americans know that special education costs per student are double the cost of educating an average student.

The United States remains the world's wealthiest nation — says the United Nations Development Program — but that wealth is increasingly concentrated. The richest 1 percent of Americans now own 36 percent of the nation's wealth, up from 20 percent in 1975.

A massive three-year study of school sports injuries has some surprises— for those who still believe that girls sports aren't the "real thing." In 1995, says the National Athletic Trainers Association, 2.6 percent of boys basketball injuries and 3 percent of girls basketball injuries required surgery.

The United States Department of Education is joining with four states and PBS this fall to launch Crossroads Cafe, the first nationally televised English instruction program. Videos of the 26-part series will be distributed in New York, California, Florida, and Illinois.

On the Cutting Edge

Two Sides, One Focus

In Seattle, the Association and school district turn their trust into a treaty.

Seattle, the birthplace of Jimi Hendrix, the grunge movement, and Starbucks Coffee, has produced yet another innovation: a landmark "trust agreement" between the Seattle Education Association and the school district.

Under this innovative agreement, which is "wrapped" around the normal contract, both the Association and the administration enter into a collaborative partnership in which staff are given an unprecedented role in "decisions that affect the instruction and delivery of educational programs."

The agreement decentralizes power to the school site and allows for renegotiation of all contract provisions. Moreover, the pact lists 40 areas of "mutual interests"—everything from retaining quality substitutes to increasing parent and community participation.

The document's bottom line: shared decision making and shared ownership of the district schools.

Asked why Seattle is changing the way its schools normally do business, superintendent John Stanford replies quickly, "the children."

"Normally, there is a sharp line between employees and management," explains Stanford. "There's no trust, so we end up spending our time on adult issues. We formed a partnership so we can focus on what we both agreed should be our focus—our kids."

Roger Erskine, the executive director of the Seattle Education Association, admits that establishing a culture of trust isn't going to happen overnight. But he stresses that some good has already come from just moving in that direction.

"I think we are creating more public trust in our school system," says Erskine. "Last year, for example, the business community put $11 million into our schools, up from about $1 million three or four years ago."

In addition to being notable for what it has produced more of—trust, outside funding, and public support—this novel agreement between SEA and the district is also changing the shape—and the length—of the basic contract.

Before the trust agreement, the SEA contract weighed in at a hefty 300-plus pages. Now it's far skinnier and "focused on creating a trusting teaching and learning environment," Erskine points out.

SEA member David Gardner, a teacher at Seattle's Hawthorne Elementary School, likes that idea.

"I think of it like you would a marriage," he says. "Most marriages aren't put together with extensive written agreements. They're simply built on trust."

—Alejandro Cabrera

Seattle Education Association Executive Director Roger Erskine (left) and school superintendent John Stanford are on the same page as they work to implement the trust agreement forged earlier this spring. The kids are from Van Asselt Elementary.

Cody Takes a Cut

Faced with a tight budget and burgeoning classrooms, 180 Cody (Wyoming) Education Association members have each donated 10 percent of their 1996 salary increment—a grand total of $17,000—to their schools. Teachers will determine how the money is spent, reports CEA President Nelson Thomas. And administrators have chipped in 10 percent of their increments, as well.

Spare the Rod

The Ohio Education Association task force on discipline hopes to shift the focus away from "imposing punishments" on students to "instilling discipline" in them. "One is a quick fix," says the task force report, "while the other makes a permanent change in behavior." The document urges that discipline be a team effort—including teachers, support staff, administrators, parents, students, and the community.

Virtual Volunteers

The Delaware State Education Association has just made becoming a volunteer that much easier. DSEA members now need simply point their web browsers to http://www.dmv.com/dsea/, click on the member involvement section, and select from a long list of volunteer positions. If nothing strikes their fancy, members can add their names to the "Talent Bank."

ESPs Going Online

Whether you're looking for new ideas or want to share some of your own, NEA's new ESP E-mail mailing list is just what you need. Network with colleagues on issues like contracting out, collaborative bargaining, political action, organizing and more. To subscribe, simply send the message "subscribe ESP" to: majordomo@cet.nea.org.

Nearly a quarter of today's 8-12-year-old-kids want to be teachers, according to surveys conducted this past summer at some of the nation's biggest theme parks. Teaching outpaced becoming a "famous athlete" (20 percent), doctor (16 percent), astronaut (8 percent), and every other choice.

There's a reason why poor children pass up a free or reduced-price school lunch. They fear the stigma of getting labeled poor by their peers when they pass through the lunch line without paying full price. Some school districts are addressing the problem by billing parents monthly, reports the American Food Service Association.

A quarter of the nation's children go at least one day a week without eating any breakfast at all, says the National Dairy Council. Its survey shows that 86 percent of 8- and 9-year-old girls eat breakfast daily, but only 59 percent of 12- and 13-year-old girls eat a meal to start every day.

No nation has yet made the high school diploma a universal ticket to adulthood, but the United States is getting closer, according to the U.S. Department of Education. In 1994, 84 percent of people who were eighth graders in 1988 got their diploma on time; 8 percent were still enrolled; 8 percent were dropouts.

In the Nation

A Surprise Silver Lining
Candidate Bob Dole's continuing campaign-trail attacks on teachers unions are having an unexpected side benefit for NEA. Explains NEA President Bob Chase: "The attacks are helping us get our message out." The nation's major media outlets have been beating a track to NEA's door for statements and interviews.

A Boost for Safe Schools
Congress has taken action that reinstitutes the Gun-Free Schools Zone Act, the NEA-backed legislation that makes it a federal crime to possess or discharge a firearm in a school, on school property, or within 1,000 feet of a school. The Supreme Court had struck down the original version of the law. The revised version requires prosecutors to prove that a gun possessed by a person violating the Act traveled in or affected interstate commerce.

Private School Study
NEA opposition helped stop repeated congressional attempts this past year to enact legislation that would have funded vouchers for private school tuition. But the budget bill enacted at the end of September directs the Department of Education to conduct "a feasibility study outlining the benefits of using private and parochial schools as alternatives to overcrowded public schools." NEA will work with the Department of Education to ensure the study does not lead to vouchers.

School Doors Still Open
President Clinton's veto threat has helped stop congressional moves that would have let states deny free public education to illegal immigrant children. NEA strongly opposed this proposal to limit public schooling, as did the nation's top law enforcement organizations.

On Capitol Hill, a Win for Kids

John Whitehead

Pennsylvania NEA members Diane Muth, left, and Kendra Hoffman are busy on the phones helping to get out the vote on Election Day, November 5.

President Clinton signs a new federal budget that ups school funding.

In a dramatic about-face, the cutback-happy 104th Congress has passed a federal budget that actually increases education funding.

The new budget okayed by Congress September 30—and signed by President Clinton two hours before the federal 1997 fiscal year began—boosts funding for basic Department of Education programs by $3.52 billion, or 15.4 percent, above final 1996 levels.

The newly adopted budget, notes NEA lobbyist Joel Packer, restores all the education funding cuts enacted since Newt Gingrich became House speaker in January 1995. If you take inflation into account, adds Packer, the new budget represents a funding increase of $705 million over federal school spending two years ago.

All this unexpected good news for education came just over a month before the November elections, and that timing, says Dale Lestina, NEA's top staffer on Capitol Hill, was no coincidence.

Lawmakers who voted for cutting education earlier in the 104th Congress clearly don't want to face voters this November with another vote against schools, explains Lestina. The message that the American people want education funded is clear.

NEA members, says Lestina, helped spell out that message with nearly two years of letters, phone calls, faxes, and visits to congressional offices.

In August, NEA took another key step that emphasized the depth of public support for education. In San Diego, during the GOP convention, NEA President Bob Chase released the results of a national poll of rank-and-file Republican voters.

The poll, conducted for NEA by noted Republican pollster Linda DiVall, found that 79 percent of Republican voters want federal aid to education either increased or maintained—not cut.

Will the new momentum for increasing federal aid to education continue past Election Day?

That depends, say NEA's Lestina, on who gets elected this November.

"NEA members need to look closely at all the education votes our representatives have cast over the last two years," he notes. "We need to continue supporting candidates who've been for public education all along, not just when it's election time."

NEA members can use cyberspace to check out the education voting records of all members of Congress. Just point your Web browser to http://www.nea.org/info/lrc/index.html, the address of the NEA Legislative Report Card.

The Good News for Schools and Kids

Here's a list of key funding increases in the new federal budget.

Title 1: $470 million (up 6.5 percent)
Safe and Drug-Free Schools: $90 million (up 19.3 percent)
Bilingual and Immigrant Education: $73.7 million (up 39.2 percent)
Special Education State grants (IDEA): $784 million (up 26.1 percent)
Vocational Education: $52 million (up 4.8 percent)
Educational Technology: $227 million (up 288.5 percent)
Head Start: $412 million (up 11.5 percent).

The Bottom Line

This fall, for the first time ever, colleges will be granting college course credit to students from more than half the nation's high schools. In all, more than 200,000 freshmen are walking onto campuses with Advanced Placement credits. The average participating high school now offers six different AP courses.

Newspapers headlined the news of rising SAT scores earlier this fall, but most missed this point: More students are taking tougher courses. Over the last 10 years, the College Board reports, the percentage of students who have taken precalculus, chemistry, world history, and physics are all up.

For the second year in a row, that most horrible of youth statistics—the number of murders committed by juveniles—is down 15.2 percent. Overall juvenile arrest rates are down 22.8 percent since 1993. Attorney General Janet Reno gives part of the credit to programs that offer kids positive after-school alternatives.

Teen drug use has risen sharply since 1992, says the federal Department of Health and Human Services. Some 10 percent of teens now say they have used drugs in the past month. Part of the prevention problem, says the Community Anti-Drug Coalition of America, is parents who're unable to talk with their kids.

In the States

Going Public To Stay Public

In Michigan, NEA members learn that public support is the best weapon against privatization.

Here they come. Private companies are now beefing up their public sector marketing staffs, trying to sell local governments every service from building maintenance to student transportation.

In at least one state, Michigan, this grab for public services—and jobs—is being countered by united labor action. Last June, Michigan Education Association members joined with members of AFL-CIO unions in a state capitol rally against privatization.

They followed up by planning a mass lobbying drive for a bill that provides interest arbitration for education support employees and permits them to bargain over subcontracting—a right they lost in 1994.

Winning bargaining rights, however, is just half the battle. The other half is winning public sympathy and support.

"The NEA locals that get privatized are inactive in their community," warns Roxanne Dove, NEA's ESP program coordinator. "Instead of putting out fires, our members need to do what they do best—get involved in the communities where they live and work."

That kind of involvement is paying off for school support staffers in St. Joseph County, Michigan, who are networking on a county-wide basis to stop subcontracting before it starts.

Their first victory has come in the White Pigeon district, where a campaign by members of the White Pigeon Education Support Staff Association (WPESSA) prompted the superintendent to delay plans to privatize school transportation.

The campaign ingredients: research on the companies bidding for privatization contracts (with help from the state Association) and lots of one-on-one chats with friends and neighbors.

Jennifer Giesey

"We've gotten 100 percent support from the teachers," says White Pigeon, Michigan bus driver Cindy Coohon (right, with co-worker Garnet Lockwood) of her local's effort to stop the district's privatization plans.

WPESSA President Cindy Coohon dug up incriminating data on one of the bidders, Laidlaw, Inc.—North America's largest school transportation firm—with the help of her local newspaper. Then she and fellow bus drivers Garnet Lockwood and Chuck Stoddard formed a "Drivers Against Privatizing" committee.

"We fought hard," Coohon recalls. "I spent six to seven hours a day on the phone talking to people out there who don't know what happens after they put their kids on a school bus."

Committee members and other drivers—many now transporting their second generation of students—raised questions about thorny issues like the hidden costs of privatization (including extra charges for extra trips) and company accountability, efficiency, and safety practices.

Residents became so concerned that last spring 50 of them convened a community privatization forum in a rented American Legion Hall.

All this controversy eventually led school district officials to reconsider their privatization plans. Instead of contracting out, the district has now purchased a new bus and hired a crackerjack local mechanic to overhaul the district fleet. He's saving them big bucks.

So why should you hire total strangers when your neighbors—folks you know and trust—do a great job and look out for your kids?

You shouldn't, says White Pigeon, Michigan. You shouldn't go with the private Johnny-come-lately firms. You stick with the tried and true.

Statistics Don't Lie, But...

Those reports out of Milwaukee claiming that students who use tax dollars to attend private schools—in the city's voucher experiment—are getting better test scores than their public school counterparts are misleading. NEA researchers have uncovered major flaws in the research that purports to show superior private school performance. One example: On average, mothers of sampled voucher students had a high school diploma, plus some secondary education, while mothers of the public school group were dropouts.

It Pays To Be Brave

Thanks to a federal wage and hour suit initiated by 11 courageous Alabama Education Association members—some 50 houseparents at the Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind have received a big, fat check. Required to work 24-hour shifts on campus, employees had been denied pay for the hours they slept. A federal judge ordered compensation for all time on duty— $919,830 in back pay for 25 total workers.

Something's in the Water

An Iowa State Education Association survey shows 78 percent of Iowa teachers are satisfied with their jobs—up 10 percent in just three years. Better yet: 82 percent say their jobs give them a "sense of accomplishment," and 88 percent are satisfied with their "relationships with colleagues."

Help If You Can

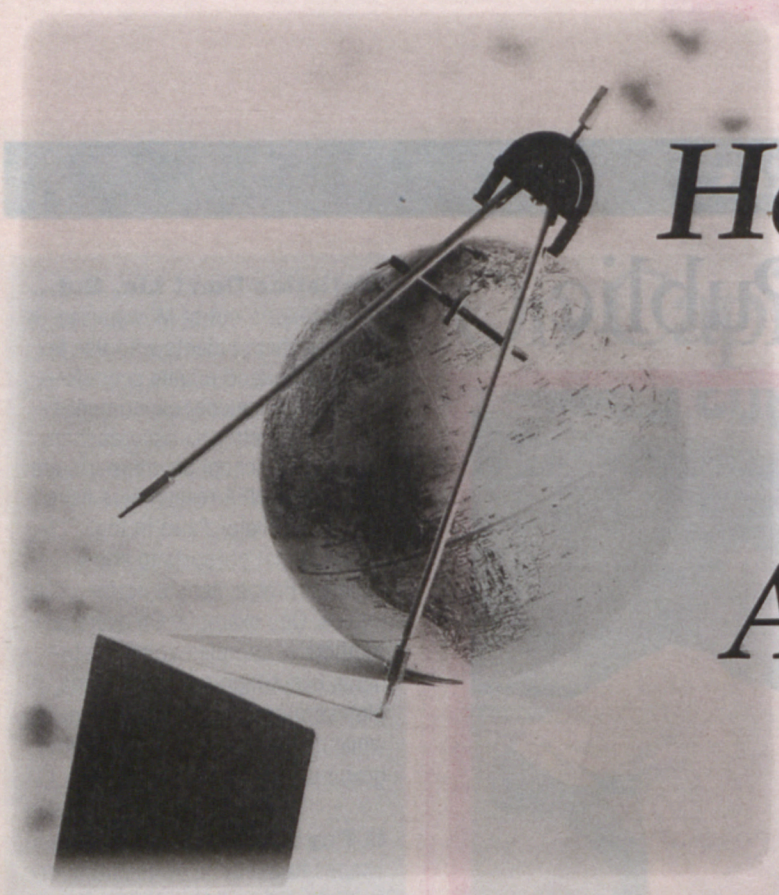
NEA-Alaska has set up a fund to help 20 members who lost property in a wild-fire that swept through the Mat-Su Valley. Make checks payable to NEA-Alaska and send to Mat-Su Fire Relief Fund, NEA-Alaska, 1840 S. Bragaw, Suite 103, Anchorage, AK 99508.

Over 40 states let schools hire teachers who don't meet certification standards. The NEA-backed National Commission on Teaching and America's Future has a blueprint to change that. For details, check the Web at (http://www.tc.columbia.edu/~teachcomm). More about the report in upcoming issues.

It would cost a staggering $112 billion to fix the nation's crumbling school buildings, says the federal General Accounting Office. In 1994, states chipped in $3.5 billion for school repairs. Hey, the federal government could come up with $10 billion by upgrading its F-15 fighter jets instead of buying new planes.

Georgia has become the first state to offer free preschool to both low- and middle-income four-year-olds. In all, Georgia this fall will provide preschool for 60 percent of the state's 100,000 pre-K kids. Governor Zell Miller started the state's preschool initiative three years ago. For more on Miller's moves, see page 47.

The nation's tobacco industry fears it might have to drop cigarette advertising that targets teens, so Big Tobacco has a back-up strategy: the Internet. R.J. Reynolds and Brown and Williamson have created Web sites that offer European teenagers updates on dance parties where cigarettes are given away free.



Honoring the heroes of American Education.

Since 1988, The McGraw-Hill Companies has been honoring the heroes of American education with The Harold W. McGraw, Jr. Prize in Education. In the process, we have been educating ourselves.

We have learned that, in addition to being a time of challenge in America's schools, this is also a time of great creativity and renewed hope for the future.

We have learned that there is need both for innovative solutions and a commitment to basic educational standards if we are to meet the challenges of the future. And that there must be accountability for achieving those standards if America's children are to excel in our increasingly competitive world.

But perhaps the greatest lesson we have learned is that our nation's most vital educational resources are the men and women who devote their lives to educating our children. It is the commitment and devotion of America's educators coupled with community involvement that will prepare future generations for the global challenges of the 21st century.

That's why for the past eight years The McGraw-Hill Companies has been proud to recognize individuals who have provided outstanding leadership in such areas as teaching, administration and public service.

This year, as in years past, we are pleased to honor three of the many heroes of American education — men and women who have shown not only the ability to foster the education of students, but to provide others with models for success and achievement.

The 1996 winners of the Harold W. McGraw, Jr. Prize in Education are:

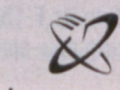
Dr. Yvonne Chan. *As principal of the Vaughn Next Century Learning Center in Los Angeles, Dr. Chan has earned a national reputation for excellence in improving educational standards, raising funds for educational initiatives and galvanizing support from parents, teachers and the community. Under Chan's leadership, achievement test scores, discipline and attendance have improved dramatically. She has been responsible for several acclaimed initiatives, including converting abandoned housing into classrooms, reducing class size, extending the school year, getting students online and mobilizing the community to increase drug awareness and prevention programs.*

Dr. Donald W. Ingwerson. *As Los Angeles County superintendent of schools, Donald Ingwerson is implementing the types of programs and school reforms for which he received national acclaim during his twelve-year tenure as superintendent of Jefferson County Public Schools in Louisville, Kentucky. Ingwerson, who now directs the nation's largest regional education agency, has launched ambitious initiatives in the areas of educational technology, family services and education reform with the support of an unprecedented alliance of the private sector, community leaders and multiple school systems.*

Colorado Governor Roy Romer. *Governor Romer has been at the forefront of the effort to set education standards since the inception of these initiatives. In Colorado, he initiated and secured passage of legislation which requires all public school systems in the state to adopt clear standards for what students should know and be able to do in six core academic areas. On a national level, Romer currently serves on the National Assessment Governing Board and is one of twelve governors and CEOs who are establishing a non-governmental organization to support the implementation of state standards and assessments.*

The McGraw-Hill Companies is proud to honor the accomplishments of our 1996 winners and to contribute to the search for the educational solutions our nation needs to succeed and prosper in the 21st century.

The 1996 Harold W. McGraw, Jr. *Prize in Education*



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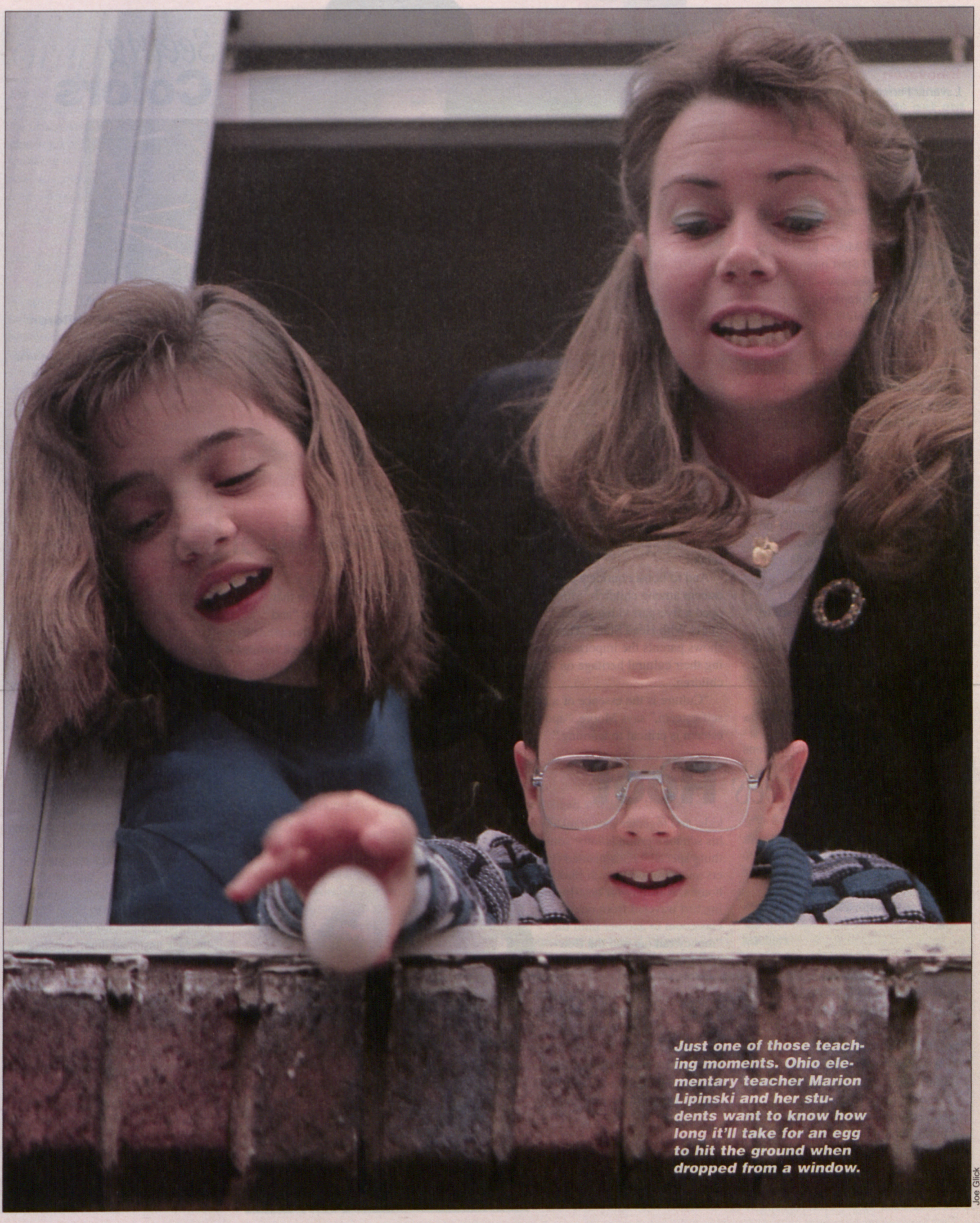


Just one of those teaching moments. Ohio elementary teacher Marion Lipinski and her students want to know how long it'll take for an egg to hit the ground when dropped from a window.

Joe Glick

Innovators

Getting Ready To Learn

Innovator:
Laverne Fernandes Moore

Job:
Moore is a special education teacher temporarily assigned to work as the Head Start collaboration director for the state of Hawaii.

Bright Idea:
A few years ago, Moore took a look at Hawaii's Head Start program and didn't like what she saw—especially when it came to preparing poor children for school.

"There was no action plan among federal, state, and local agencies serving low-income families and no comprehensive early childhood development training of preschool and kindergarten teachers," says Moore.

So Moore worked with the state to beef up Head Start programs. She coordinated the efforts of the state Board of Education and several government agencies to identify priorities for Head Start projects.

She also started a statewide training program that helps parents become skilled at teaching their own children. "Parents can learn to teach their children colors, numbers, and directions," says Moore, "and to help them express themselves through art."

Moore also developed a statewide literacy program that teaches non-English speaking parents to read and "speak enough English to be able to ask teachers the right questions about their children's progress in school."

Ray Tanaka

And to boost confidence and self-esteem among children, Moore developed a five-part video series, "Art Starts With Head Start." The series shows parents the importance of passing their cultural heritage on to their children.

"Culture is the essence of a child's self-esteem," says Moore, "and self-esteem is critical to learning."

Impact:
Social service agencies that work with low-income families in Hawaii are now networking and sharing resources via the Internet.

"Parents feel more secure in their parenting skills," Moore says, "and teachers are seeing that children are coming to school better prepared."

For More:
Contact Moore at 808/733-4476 or 808/395-6207.

Esteem Takes Root

Innovator:
Anthony Haynes

Job:
Haynes is an elementary school custodian in Jefferson County, Alabama.

Bright Idea:
When Haynes learned that a local bank was offering a $500 teaching and learning grant to educators, he spun a longtime dream into a proposal.

"I wanted to keep kids from falling through the cracks," he says. "I thought that getting them involved in beautifying the school's grounds would help make them feel a part of their environment and motivate them to do well in school."

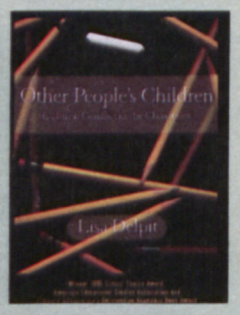
Haynes got the $500, enlisted 100 kids, and together they transformed his school's grounds into "something special." Kids planted flowers and shrubs and built birdhouses. A trophy for best-looking turf traveled from one classroom to another until the "money ran out and the flowers bloomed."

Jeff Roberts

Impact:
The school's campus looks great, and the children—many growing up without dads—felt good about themselves, Haynes says. "They became very energetic, and I saw a rise in their self-esteem."

For More:
Haynes can be reached at Hillview Elementary School at 205/798-3121.

Seeing Colors



Other People's Children
Lisa Delpit. The New Press, 206 pp. $11.95. A provocative new book exploring how stereotypes and cultural misunderstandings come between educators and students.

"Many teachers and teacher educators believe that to acknowledge a child's color is to insult him or her. I've heard many well-intentioned teachers say, 'I don't see color, I only see children.' What message does this statement send? That there is something wrong with being black or brown? I would like to suggest that if one does not see color, then one does not really see children. Children made 'invisible' in this manner become hard-pressed to see themselves worthy of notice. . . .

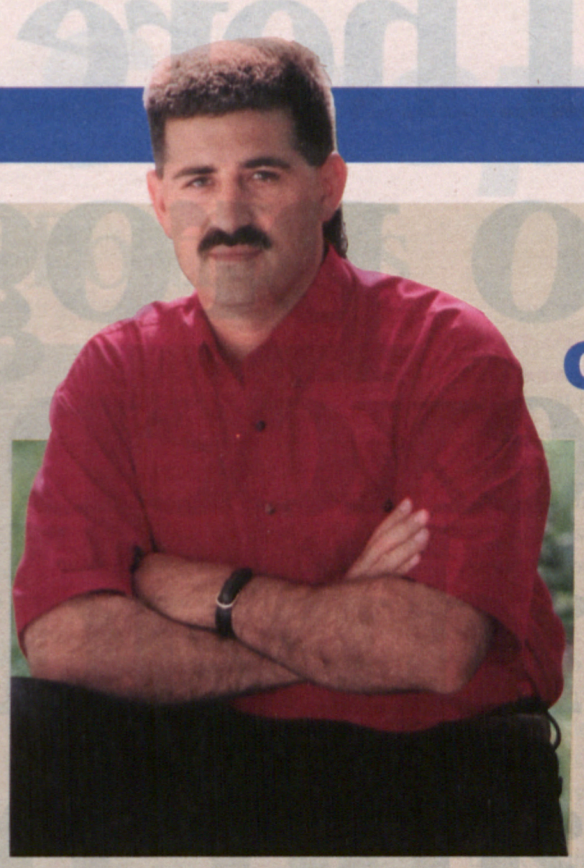
I recall one five-year-old Asian girl, Cathy, in a kindergarten class. Cathy was dutifully going about the task assigned to her, placing a number of objects next to various numerals printed on a cloth. She appeared to be thoroughly engaged, never disturbing anyone near her. Meanwhile, the teacher's attention was devoted to the children who demanded her presence in one form or another or to those she believed would have difficulty with the task assigned them. Small, quiet Cathy fit neither category.

At the end of Cathy's work time, no numeral had the correct number of objects next to it. The teacher later told me that Cathy, like Asian-American students she had taught previously, was one of the best students in the class.

In this case, a child's culturally influenced, nondisruptive classroom behavior, along with the teacher's stereotype of 'good Asian students,' led to her not receiving appropriate instruction."

Grappling with Gangs

The author of Gangsta in the House: Understanding Gang Culture, *Mike Knox is a 15-year veteran of the Houston Police Department and founding member of its first gang unit. Knox is now a national speaker and consultant on the topic of gangs.*



Q What kinds of kids gravitate to gangs?

A Kids looking for security, a sense of belonging, and social acceptance. They view themselves as failures, but they really want to be successes. So they reorganize their beliefs. In their minds, failing to succeed within the system is the key to success. What's good becomes bad, what's bad becomes good. For example, murder is the worst thing a person could do in our society, but in a gang, killing a rival gang member is the highest achievement.

Q What are the latest trends in gang dress in schools?

A Every street gang member wears the baggy look—which speaks about low self-esteem. Kids are also rolling up one pant leg, and, in schools with strict dress codes, they're dying the inside of their pant pockets or shifting their belt buckles to the right or left. Bandanas are part of the gangster look, as is graffiti on clothes, and the repeated wearing of certain colors like blue, black, or red.

Q What can educators do to discourage gang activity in schools?

A Educators—starting with elementary school teachers—need to work with parents on the discipline issue, because gangs are made up of kids who lack self-discipline. Schools should enforce strict dress codes, conduct codes, and no-smoking ordinances. School staff should erase graffiti as soon as it appears, because it allows gangs to exchange messages.

Q Can educators help kids get out of gangs?

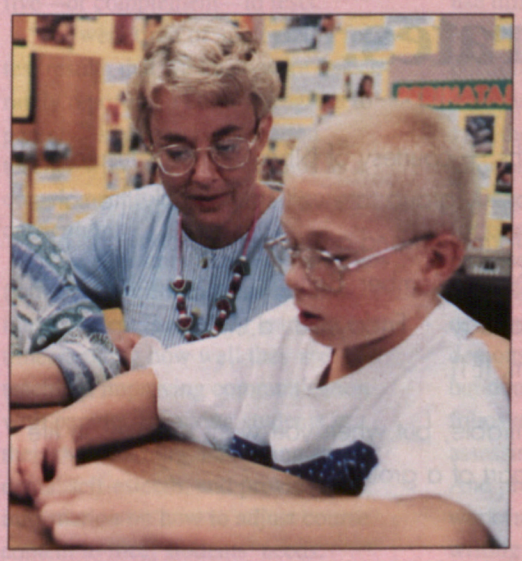
A Yes, by letting the child know he or she has a safety net—parents, and the police department. If the child is threatened, the assistant principal must remove the threatening kids from his class. The police must inform the gang member that he'll be prosecuted if he keeps it up. The parent must make sure the child changes his appearance and stops seeing gang members and that he or she is given fair, firm, and consistent discipline.

Discipline is the real cure.

"The single largest wasted resource in this country is what teachers know."

Judith Renyi, executive director
National Foundation for the Improvement of Education

Searching for Quality



Innovator:
Paula Wassink

Job:
A 23-year veteran, Wassink teaches language arts and science at Hamilton Elementary School in southwestern Michigan.

Bright Idea:
Disheartened by the messy, unorganized, lackluster work of many of her sixth graders, Wassink developed a nine-week unit to teach the importance of quality—at school and in the world of work.

For the past five years, she's been teaching her students to incorporate "organization, communication, assessment, goal setting, teamwork, and understanding one's learning style and strengths" into everything they do.

To learn organizational skills, kids maintain daily planners. To learn how to define quality, they act as quality control managers, examining different products like toothpaste, sticky notes, and fruit roll-ups.

To establish standards, they develop checklists for each task. When they've done a writing assignment, for example, they must go down the list—punctuation, spelling, topic sentence—before handing it in.

Impact:
The course has generated "great improvement in quality and grades," says Wassink. "Kids rise to the standards you set," she adds.

Wassink's developed a teacher's manual called *Quality in the Classroom* (available for $25) and has trained 300 area teachers to use it.

For More:
Contact Wassink at Hamilton Elementary School, P.O. Box 302, Hamilton, Michigan 49419, 616/751-5413.

5 Tips for Successful Inclusion Programs

1 Team teach. Having two or more teachers in the classroom helps ensure that all students' needs are met. The team teachers must have a common planning time each day.

2 Screen carefully. Students with disabilities must be screened to determine the probability of success in a large class.

3 Cut class size. Class size should not exceed 28 students, with two teachers.

4 Achieve balance. The proportion of students with learning disabilities should not exceed one-quarter of the class. The remaining three quarters should be a heterogeneous group of gifted and talented and general education students.

5 Focus. When teaching students with disabilities, focus on the student—not the diagnosis, not the label in the file.

Source: *Toward Inclusive Classrooms*, NEA Professional Library.

"There can be no progress... except in the individual and by the individual himself."

Charles Baudelaire, French poet

Obviously, Charlie never heard about our group life insurance rates.

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*Coverage depends on age of applicant.

Inside Scoop

The Latest on Student Portfolios

■ Definition, please.

Student portfolios are, literally, folders that contain collections of student work. They're used to show student learning and measure academic progress over time.

Samples of student work can be collected on paper, in photographs, on audio tape, videotape, computer disk, or CD-ROM. In some places, material may be placed in portfolios by the student, the teacher, or even the student's family.

In addition to student work, portfolios may contain student's own evaluations of their work, parent's reflections on the portfolio contents, and assessments made by teachers.

■ How hot?

"Hot, hot, hot," says Joan Herman, associate director of the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Testing at UCLA.

"Portfolio assessment has become very popular," Herman says, "because it's seen as a natural way to integrate instruction and assessment. That makes sense—student portfolios contain the products of classroom work, and, appropriately designed, can show what students have learned."

■ Why bother?

Many educators, particularly those involved in education reform efforts, see portfolio assessment as an alternative—or complement—to tests.

"We were tired of apologizing for test results that we knew were inaccurately reporting a child's progress to parents," says one kindergarten teacher who adopted portfolios as a complement to her whole language curriculum.

Other educators drawn to portfolios find them helpful in assessing how much students are really learning over time, gauging how well they are teaching, improving communication with parents, involving students in their own learning, increasing students' self-esteem, and providing information on how to adjust course content to meet students' needs.

■ How do they work?

To use portfolios effectively, many experts say, educators must be clear on two things: 1) the purpose portfolios will serve, and 2) how the student work collected in them will be evaluated.

Richard Nowitz

Despite initial frustrations with the lack of training and support, Vermont teacher Cher Feitelberg believes that student portfolios are an excellent way to chart her students' development over time.

On the first point, educators often use different types of portfolios to serve different purposes. Sometimes, portfolios are designed to serve large-scale assessment purposes—to provide the public and policy makers with information on how students are doing.

Other times, portfolios are intended for classroom teaching and learning purposes. Showcase portfolios, for example, celebrate the best work a student has done. Descriptive portfolios demonstrate what a student can do, but don't evaluate it. Evaluative portfolios are used for the sole purpose of assessing the quality of student work. And progress portfolios show student work in a particular subject area—writing, for example—over time.

When it comes to using portfolios to grade student work, many educators stumble. "The assessment part is the hardest thing for teachers to do," says Herman. "They have to figure out what makes for high quality student work and think about the specific qualities they are looking for."

■ Any downside?

Yes. "The realities of cost and feasibility for large-scale assessment purposes are a source of cold water," says UCLA's Herman.

For example, teachers in Vermont and Kentucky began to use portfolios in the early 1990s to assess student progress statewide. Such large-scale experiments required huge investments in time for training, developing evaluation criteria, reviewing portfolios, and accurately scoring open-ended work. As a result, many teachers felt unprepared and resentful.

■ Any unexpected consequences?

Many teachers who use portfolio assessment find that it inspires them to dramatically change how and what they teach.

"I realized," says Iowa teacher Donald Daws, "that if I truly believed in the process, then I could no longer have students move in a lock-step fashion through the textbook."

■ Who's behind portfolio assessment?

Nearly all big-name advocates of education innovation—including Ted Sizer, Howard Gardner, Lauren Resnick, and many others—back alternative assessment methods, including some use of student portfolios.

■ Who's throwing stones?

Those who object to portfolio use come from many camps. Some educators consider it a fad. Others oppose portfolios simply because their use is imposed by state law or districtwide dictate. Still others find portfolios too time-consuming or too difficult to evaluate consistently and fairly.

Some parents oppose portfolio use because they prefer grading systems that are more traditional, easier to understand, and more aligned with "the basics." Others find portfolios—like journals—too personal, too intrusive, and too much of an opportunity for kids to reflect on or question their surroundings. Finally, some educators and researchers worry that aggregating the results of portfolios for accountability purposes provides technically inaccurate information.

■ Where's the NEA on this?

"Student portfolios more accurately reflect what children are learning," says Lynn Coffin, director of the NEA National Center for Innovation. "That's why NEA supports these and other forms of alternative assessments."

■ Need more information?

Check out the following resources:

➤ *Student Portfolios*, one of the NEA Professional Library Teacher-to-Teacher Books, includes first-hand accounts of portfolio use. To get the NEA member price of $9.95 plus s&h, use stock #2901-1-10-F. To order, call 800/229-4200.

➤ *Portfolios: Assessing Learning in the Primary Grades*, Marianne Lucas Lescher. A quick look at literacy portfolios. To get the NEA member price of $4.50 plus s&h, use stock #1094-9-00-F. To order, call 800/229-4200.

➤ The National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Testing has a Web site (http:\\www.cse.ucla.edu) with extensive information on portfolios. Also available: a database that includes information on states' alternative assessment practices.

Students &

Good Stuff

Safe Health Care
Providing Safe Health Care: The Role of Educational Support Personnel outlines the rights and responsibilities of school support staff who work with special needs students. $10.95 plus s&h. To get the NEA member price of $4.95 plus s&h, use stock #1876-1-10-FG. To order, call the NEA Professional Library, 800/229-4200.

Research on Reading
A coalition of education groups brought together to study how children with disabilities learn to read has compiled a review of existing research on the topic. For a free packet of material, including tips and resources, contact ERIC at 800/925-7853 or 800/328-0272.

Spanning the Globe
On November 20, the Peace Corps will sponsor World Wise Schools Day—a day when Peace Corps volunteers will visit classrooms to discuss their overseas experiences. Videos, study guides, and curriculum materials are available.

For free teaching materials, check out www.peacecorps.gov on the Internet. For more, write World Wise Schools, Peace Corps, 1990 K St., N.W., Washington, DC 20526.

Help for Science
Let your kids get a jump on physical science by visiting Homework Helper/K-12 on the Web at http://wxnet4.nbc4.com/phys-sci.html.

Combatting Prejudice
"Other Colors: Stories of Women Immigrants," a teaching kit for high school and adult education classes, includes eight audiotapes featuring stories of women immigrants from Central America, Eastern Europe, and other areas. A teacher's guide is included. $20 for individuals, $35 for institutions. Contact Other Colors, P.O. Box 4190, Albuquerque, NM, 87196, 505/265-3405.

Kids' Clubs
The Ultimate Kids' Club Book, a great resource for teachers who sponsor after-school clubs, covers how to raise money, organize clubs, set goals, elect officers, and more. $11.95 plus $4.25 s&h. To order, contact Free Spirit Publishing, 400 First Avenue North, Suite 616, Minneapolis, MN 55401, 612/338-2068.

You know you have a problem when...

"The school policy handbook isn't ready until January."

Roberta Diane Eldridge, special education teacher, Baldwin Park, California

Dilemma

Are You a Slave to the Clock?

How do you keep the clock from driving instruction?

In more than 20 years of teaching English, I have learned that middle school students are among the world's best clock watchers. But I think helping students focus on their work products reduces clock watching.

One of the most successful practices at my school is designing student writing assignments that are for a wider audience than the classroom.

We have students write autobiographies and mystery stories that are posted on their own home pages on the World Wide Web. Parents, fellow students, and the general public are then readers of a student's work.

This kind of assignment focuses students on the quality and meaning of their work. They know what they're doing is about more than just passing the minutes on the class clock.

Beth Christensen
English teacher
Mankato, Minnesota

I keep the clock from driving instruction by focusing instead on vision, goals, and results. I start with a very clear vision of what I want to achieve in my class. Why am I here? What do I want to accomplish this year? How does my vision mesh with the district's vision and its expectations of students?

Once I arrive at answers—with help and buy-in from my students and their parents—I work to set the goals that will make my vision a reality. Then I decide how I'll know when I've reached my goals—in other words, what results I plan to measure.

Finally, I work with my students to develop the most effective processes for reaching these goals. The students are then responsible for their learning, and the clock becomes irrelevant.

Linda Bacon
Library media specialist
Pinellas County, Florida

It's important to prioritize skills that must be taught—especially skills that absolutely cannot be omitted. When appropriate, I share this schedule with the students, and they are sure to keep me on target. To stop kids from watching the clock, I assess their skills and try to avoid re-teaching skills already mastered. Sometimes it helps to check to see if all the practice skills I've scheduled are really necessary. It's also useful to construct classroom activities that cover multiple disciplines. That way, I cover more ground with the limited time I have.

Patricia Graham
English teacher
Colorado Springs, Colorado

Got Answers?

The new *NEA Today* aims to help solve classroom dilemmas by offering advice from educators who've been there. One upcoming question: **How do you ease the transition of new students into your classroom?** If you've got an answer, send it to us by regular mail, Fax, or E-mail at this address: dilemma2@neatoday.nea.org. Be sure to include your name, position, and phone numbers.

Strategies

You know you've been successful when...

"Your former students were so inspired, they're now teachers."

Annette Resseau, reading teacher, Orangeburg, South Carolina

Delight

A Bridge from Math to Algebra

A revolutionary project helps middle school kids in Mississippi make a tough transition.

For two weeks each year, award-winning blues artists settle in at Brinkley Middle School in Jackson, Mississippi to teach sixth graders the history of the blues. Kids learn how to play guitar, keyboard, and drums. A lucky few get to form their own band.

The kids aren't in music class—or history for that matter. The subject at hand is algebra.

"While creating music the kids learn about fractions, ratios, and measuring tempos," says Lynn Moss, the sixth grade teacher who helped to launch the curriculum in Jackson. "It teaches them that math is a part of everything we do."

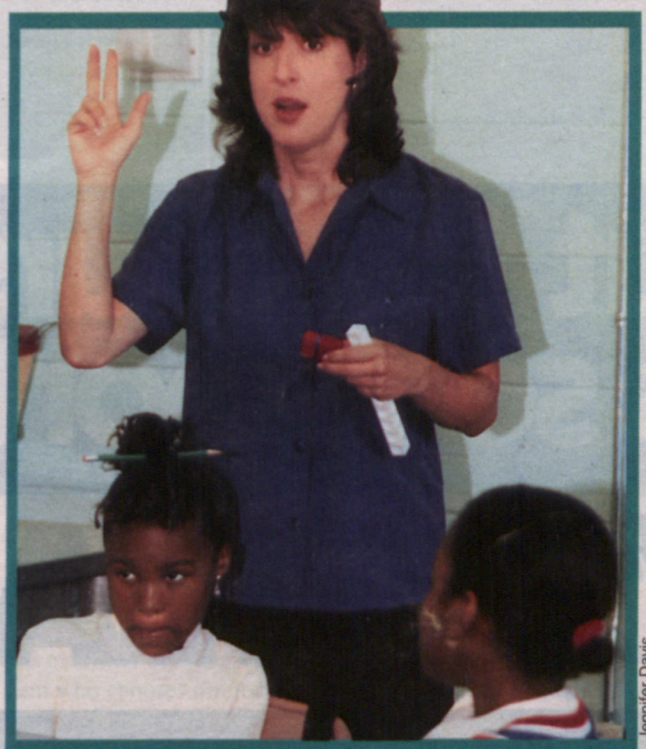
The kids in Jackson—and 105 other schools mostly in inner cities and rural Southern towns—are clapping to the beat of the Algebra Project, a year-long curriculum developed by civil rights activist Bob Moses 14 years ago.

"Through games and experiences, kids live math—feel it, write about it, draw it, dance it, walk it, and talk it," explains Moss, a member of the Mississippi Association of Educators.

To teach the interdisciplinary Algebra Project curriculum, teachers start with a cultural experience—a trip to a place that was meaningful during the civil rights movement.

In Jackson, kids visit the home of slain civil rights leader Medgar Evers and Tougaloo College, a plantation that became a college for Blacks in the 1860s.

Then the math kicks in. Students formulate a trip line that becomes an integer line. Each stop along the way represents a positive number. Negative numbers are used to show the trip home. Students then draw their experience of the trip and talk and write about it.



Jennifer Davis

By integrating math, culture, and life experiences, "children see that anything is possible," says Jackson middle school teacher Lynn Moss, "even algebra."

Not only does the trip make math relevant, "it connects kids to their culture and builds their self-esteem and pride," says Algebra Project creator Bob Moses.

Games, an important part of the project, teach students other elements of algebra. For example, Moss's students compete in teams speed-stacking unifix cubes, then averaging the teams' scores.

Exponents are taught through building wooden blocks. And "make do" activities, where students must substitute one thing for another, teach them about equivalents and equality.

Even dance becomes a tool of learning when kids form a three-dimensional structure with their bodies, while other students dance through it. Forming the structure and breaking it into planes teaches them geometry and how to manipulate the symbols of algebra, says Moss.

Since launching the project, discipline problems among the project's students have nearly disappeared. Overall, in the Jackson Public School District, 80 percent of schools in the project report improved math scores, as well as improved student and improved teacher attitudes toward math.

Moss can attest to that. "Three years ago, I was about to throw in the towel—the way we were teaching math wasn't effective, and kids were failing.

"The Algebra Project gets kids willing and excited to work," she adds. "It doesn't leave them with lots of abstractions to memorize. It makes math meaningful."

To learn more about the Algebra Project, contact Lynn Moss at 601/987-3573 or Dave Dennis at the Southern Initiative of the Algebra Project, 601/969-3198.

Idea Exchange

What's Your Number?

I've come up with a way to ensure fairness in my classroom of third and fourth graders. At the beginning of the year, I assign each student in my class a number.

When the date matches the student's number, that student is the Kid of the Day. For example, on November 1, student #1 is kid of the day and gets to be morning greeter, snack drink collector, paper passer, and line leader.

All students know they will have a turn. And there are usually enough extra days in the month so that the kids whose number falls on a weekend still get a turn.

Hallery Brunet
Randolph, Vermont

It's Math Time

I thought it would be marvelous if, just once, my second graders acknowledged the announcement of math time with as much enthusiasm as they save for other subjects. So one day, after announcing math time, I began to do the electric slide dance to the cheers of my students.

From then on, each math session started with a party dance—Mexican hat dance, bunny hop, or conga line. My students now look forward to math—they love the physical activity before settling down.

Florence Riker
Denville, New Jersey

Speak Up

To boost their speaking skills, my seniors prepare a report on the vocation of their choice and present it orally and with visuals to younger students in grades 5-6. I also have students make presentations to their peers, so they learn to vary presentations to fit their audience.

Sherry Holt
Litchfield, Illinois

Share Your Ideas

You can pass along your classroom tips to *NEA Today's* 2.2 million readers in one of these four ways:

- By Mail: *NEA Today*, 1201 16th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036
- By phone: 202/822-7201
- By Fax: 202/822-7206
- By E-mail: Ideas@neatoday.nea.org

"[The National Board's] standards offer the most powerful tools we have for rejuvenating the soul of the profession. The Commission recommends that states and local education agencies set goals and enact incentives for National Board Certification in every district, with the aim of certifying 105,000 teachers during the next ten years."

— from What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future, the recently released report from the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future.

Find out for yourself why it's so important

800/22-TEACH

the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards

For the 1996-97 school year, certificates will be available in the following areas:

AVAILABLE BEGINNING OCTOBER 1, 1996

- EARLY ADOLESCENCE/ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS (student ages 11-15)
- EARLY ADOLESCENCE/GENERALIST *(generalist refers to subject matter spanning the curriculum)*
- EARLY CHILDHOOD/GENERALIST (ages 3-8)

AVAILABLE BEGINNING DECEMBER 1, 1996

- MIDDLE CHILDHOOD/GENERALIST (ages 7-12)
- EARLY ADOLESCENCE THROUGH YOUNG ADULTHOOD/ART (ages 11-18+)
- ADOLESCENCE AND YOUNG ADULTHOOD/MATH (ages 14-18+)

Time is running out for you to participate this school year. Please call now for National Board Certification information and an application.

Health

Helping Kids Live with AIDS

Dr. Martin Sklaire is a practicing pediatrician, a clinical professor of pediatrics at Yale University, an adviser to several school systems, and a member of the American Academy of Pediatrics' Committee on Pediatric AIDS. He spoke recently with NEA Health Information Network staffer Paul Sathrum.

How many young people in the United States are living with HIV/AIDS?

As of December 1995, there were 6,600 children under the age of 13 diagnosed with AIDS, of which 3,600 have died. Between the ages of 13-19, 2,100 young people have been diagnosed with AIDS.

These numbers will go up as HIV spreads through the heterosexual community to more young adults and as more successful drug treatments prolong survival time for those young people already infected.

Do children born with HIV/AIDS face any unique challenges in mental and physical development?

Yes. Some children with HIV/AIDS suffer from deficits in memory, problems with cognitive or sensory development, and psychological trauma. Most have high rates of absenteeism.

On a social level, children born with HIV face questions about how they got the disease—and how their parents got it. In addition, if their diagnosis is made public, they may face harassment from other children or people who don't want them in the classroom or on the playing field.

As a result of all of these factors, many children born with HIV tend to be slower learners than their peers.

Should a student's HIV status be made public?

That's entirely up to the child, the child's physician, and the child's family. Under civil rights laws, all handicapped children have a right to be in school and have the right to receive an appropriate public education.

In my experience, there are two kinds of disclosure—full and partial. A student who chooses full disclosure lets everyone in school know. A student who chooses limited disclosure may choose to inform only the superintendent, the school nurse, and perhaps the principal.

Medical records are confidential—if someone chooses to disclose medical information without the parent's permission, they can be sued for violating confidentiality and civil rights law.

Which school employees need to know whether a student has HIV?

Actually nobody *needs* to know if a child has HIV infection. School employees concerned about a child's learning problems can handle those problems without full disclosure of the medical diagnosis. And all school employees must be trained in—and practice—universal precautions.

If a student decides to disclose, what should schools do to prepare employees and students?

This is where an AIDS education program comes in. AIDS education should be done from kindergarten through 12th grade as part of a health education curriculum that covers both sexuality education and infectious disease education.

Education can dispel myths, inform people that AIDS can't be spread by casual means, and train them in infectious disease precautions.

What can NEA members do to help provide a safe environment for these students?

Be an advocate for the child, develop health education programs, sponsor AIDS education programs, sponsor workshops at NEA meetings, and network with your community's health professionals, social workers, and activists dealing with HIV/AIDS. Be an advocate for school employee training and encourage teacher colleges to give teachers-in-training a complete AIDS education.

But, most important, help these children live as full and productive lives as possible—and help them get a quality education.

From the Network

The NEA Health Information Network provides technical assistance, resources, and referrals concerning classroom-based HIV education and workplace issues. Call 800/718-8387 or send your request to NEA-HIN, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036.

For more information on AIDS, check out these resources:

- *Someone at School has AIDS.* A complete guide to education policies concerning HIV infection. $15 plus $4 s&h. To order, contact the National Association of State Boards of Education, 1012 Cameron St., Alexandria, VA 22314, 800/220-5183.

- *Programs That Work: School-Based HIV, STD, and Pregnancy Prevention Education.* An overview of three curricula, including target audience, activities, and ordering information. For a free copy, contact NEA-HIN.

- *CDC National AIDS Hotline Classroom Calls.* An opportunity to bring the National AIDS Hotline into the classroom and give students a chance to ask questions of a trained educator. Calls are free and can last up to 30 minutes. All you need is a speaker phone. Spanish and TTY services available. For details, call 800/342-AIDS.

- *World AIDS Day, December 1, 1996: One World, One Hope.* Free action kits. Available in limited numbers from the American Association for World Health, 1825 K St., N.W., #1208, Washington, DC 20006, 202/466-5883. Send E-mail inquiries to AAWH-STAFF@aol.com.

- *Labor Leader's Kit.* Resources to help your school respond to AIDS in the workplace. Includes information on developing workplace policy, training union reps, involving the community, and more. Call the National AIDS Clearinghouse, 800/458-5231.

- For local and state school-based HIV policy recommendations, contact your local or state department of education.

Professional

Good Stuff

Collaboration How-to
New from the NEA Professional Library: *Professional Development Schools: Combining School Improvement and Teacher Preparation.* To order, call 800/229-4200. $18.95 plus s&h. To get the NEA member price, $16.95 plus s&h, use stock #1869-9-10-F. California and Washington, D.C. residents, please add sales tax.

Watch 'Network News'
PDS Network News is a free quarterly newsletter from the Professional Development School Network, coordinated by the National Center for Restructuring Education, Schools, and Teaching, with a grant from the Danforth Foundation.

For details, write to NCREST, Box 110, Teachers College, Columbia University, 525 W. 120th St., New York, NY 10027.

Cultural Diversity
Need to know how to work effectively with students of diverse social classes, ethnicities, cultures, and language backgrounds? Get a copy of *Educating Teachers for Cultural Diversity*, a report by Kenneth Zeichner first published in 1993.

For a copy, send $7 to National Center for Research on Teacher Learning, Michigan State University, 116 Erickson Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824-1034, 517/355-9302.

Learning To Make Change
The March 1996 issue of *Phi Delta Kappan* (Vol. 77, No. 7) features a special section on professional development and school reform. For a single copy, send $4.50 plus a $3 processing fee to Phi Delta Kappa International, Inc., 408 N. Union, P.O. Box 789, Bloomington, IN 47402.

Getting Better
The entire March 1996 issue (Vol. 53, No. 6) of *Educational Leadership* magazine addresses a single topic: "Improving Professional Performance." $9 including s&h. To order, contact the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1250 N. Pitt St., Alexandria, VA 22314-1453, 703/549-9110.

You know you have a problem when...

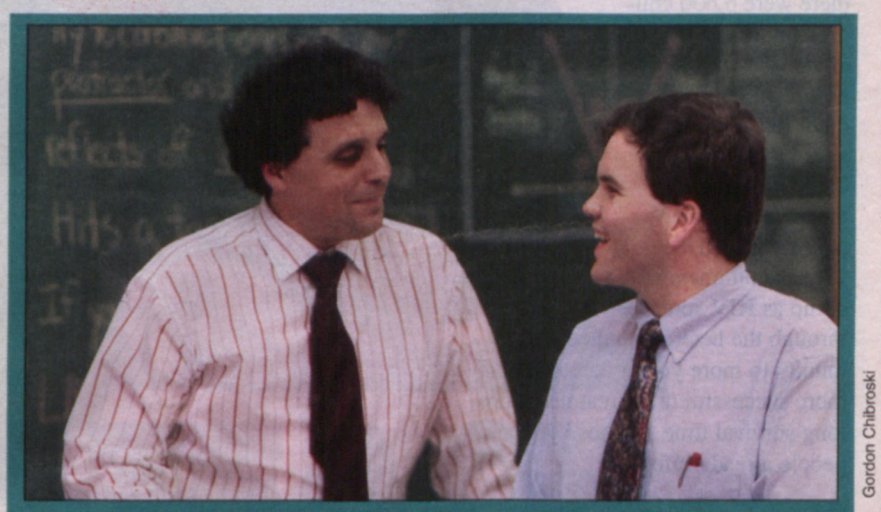
"You go into the faculty room and everyone in the room immediately stops talking."

Georgette Kapos, Lincoln Elementary School, Layton, Utah

Dilemma

Teachers: The Next Generation

How do you make the most of your student teacher—and help your student teacher make the most of you?



Gordon Chibroski

Former student teacher Donald Glover (right) completed his internship with help from Maine teacher Harry Brown.

Before the semester starts, I meet with my student teacher a few times and hand over copies of the class text and related materials. During the semester, we meet regularly to go over a week-by-week teaching plan together. I assign specific responsibilities when I see they can handle it.

I let my student teachers know I consider it crucial that they attend professional conferences and workshops where they can meet and exchange ideas with other professionals.

At the end of the semester, I provide access to my files. It's awfully hard for a new teacher to start from ground zero.

Peter Parlett
Physics teacher
Wilmington, Delaware

For the first two weeks of the semester, I have student teachers observe and investigate what other teachers and school employees do.

They talk with administrators about everything from hiring personnel to developing curriculum. They talk with elementary teachers to see what kids learn before they reach high school. They talk with school secretaries and custodians about their jobs. And they spend a lot of time in the teachers' lounge talking with faculty and support staff in our own school.

For the most part, education courses don't provide this kind of practical—and priceless—overview.

Kathy Steen
English teacher
Evanston, Wyoming

I think the keys are preparation and organization.

Before school starts, I meet with my student teacher to discuss, among other things, the intern's anticipated teaching schedule and to present the school faculty handbook and the guidelines for special education.

On the student teacher's first day, I present a packet of information that includes dates of faculty and department meetings, the end of marking periods, and holidays and vacations.

I also prepare a list of duties for the student teacher and an expectation sheet that explains the points on which my evaluation will be based.

Elizabeth Everettt
Special ed teacher
Chesapeake, Virginia

The most important thing for a student intern is to get as much actual teaching experience as possible. So I start by having the intern observe my teaching. After a few days, we team-teach. Finally, the intern teaches alone.

We meet each day after school to discuss the intern's performance. It's wonderful to see student teachers apply the theory they've learned to actual classroom practice.

Lavonne Thomas
Fourth grade teacher
Memphis, Tennessee

Got Answers?

How do you use planning time effectively? If you've got an answer, send it to us by regular mail, Fax, or E-Mail at this address: dilemma2@neatoday.nea.org. Include your name and phone numbers.

Growth

You know you've been successful when...

"One of your ideas wins a grant and becomes the basis for a staff development workshop."

Renee Heiss, Northern Burlington County Regional High School, Burlington, New Jersey

Delight

Need Help? Ask a Colleague

Teachers in Columbus, Ohio take charge of improving the instruction offered by other teachers.

Mike Munden

"It was such a blessing to have someone give me support, advice, and direction," says second-year teacher Lucy Lee Mader, right, with colleague Erica Todarello.

Last year was elementary teacher Lucy Lee Mader's first in the classroom—and it could have been her last.

"I was teaching in a disadvantaged neighborhood," she recalls. "Many of my first graders came to class with a lot of emotional baggage. There were behavior problems, and parental support wasn't what it should have been. I was so frustrated that I didn't see all my options."

Like all new teachers in Columbus, Ohio, Mader was assigned to a veteran teacher—in this case, Willa Mullins—whose job was to guide her through.

"Willa helped me focus and prioritize," says Mader. "Whether she was critiquing my lesson plans or advising me on internal politics, with Willa around, I just knew everything was going to be all right. She shared the wisdom of her experience with me."

As a second-year teacher, Mader now has access to the many other services provided by the Columbus Education Association's Peer Assistance and Review Program.

The program, now in its 11th year, provides up to 26 veteran teachers with release time to help others—both novice and veteran—improve their professional practice.

The veterans—known as teacher "consultants"—provide coaching, lead workshops, offer orientation programs, and even evaluate the performance of peers with the sole goal of improvement.

What's happening in Columbus, says a new report by NEA's National Foundation for the Improvement of Education (NFIE), ought to be happening in more school districts.

The report—a two-year study of teacher professional development efforts nationwide—describes the inadequacy of too many in-service efforts, cites model practices, and recommends big changes.

"The single largest wasted resource in this country is what teachers know," says NFIE Director Judith Renyi.

To help make use of that resource and boost teacher training, NFIE has announced "A Change of Course," which expects to provide $575,000 worth of grants in the next three years.

NFIE surveys show that educators are highly motivated to keep up with constant changes in technology, teaching methods, and subject content—because they want to meet their students' needs.

The NFIE report recommends:

- Flexible scheduling and an extended school year to make time for more training.
- Expanded roles for teachers in developing training, helping colleagues, and training new teachers.
- Increased use of community resources—libraries, museums, and more—vital to teachers' learning.

To find out more about the report, check out NFIE's homepage on the Web at http://www.nfie.org. For a report summary, point your Web browser to http://www.nea.org/resources/nfierel.html.

For a complete copy of *Teachers Take Charge of Their Learning*, send $15 plus $3.50 s&h to NFIE Publications, P.O. Box 509, West Haven, CT 06516.

Idea Exchange

Topical Tips

If you're getting ready to talk with administrators about professional development, keep these tips in mind.

- Make your language—bargaining or otherwise—clear and precise.
- Include as many members as possible in the planning. It spreads out responsibility, gives more educators ownership of professional growth issues, and shows the administration that you're serious.
- Provide materials and resources that members can use once the training is over.
- Make sure the topics are relevant to all employees—regardless of category.
- Encourage all staff to attend. You worked hard to get training into the contract, now work hard to make it a success.

Gail Colburn-Moniz
UniServ, Rhode Island

Diagnose and Deliver

The key to meaningful professional development is knowing exactly what training staffers most need. And the best way to get that information is by surveying your members.

As an active member of the Colonial Education Association, I'm the volunteer who mails survey forms to each building rep for distribution to school staff.

Once needs are determined, my next task is to find the best people, ideally our own members, to develop and present the workshops—sometimes as many as three per month. I'm now helping teachers in two other locals set up similar in-service programs.

Dottie Greenley
Delaware City, Delaware

Share Your Ideas

You can pass along your classroom tips to *NEA Today*'s 2.2 million readers in one of these four ways:

- By mail: *NEA Today*, 1201 16th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036
- By phone: 202/822-7201
- By Fax: 202/822-7206
- By E-mail: Ideas@neatoday.nea.org

Bits & Bytes

New & Noteworthy

Student Contest
Students in grades 6-12 can compete individually or as teams, in basic or advanced categories, to design a screensaver that promotes recognition of intellectual property rights. Entries must be registered with the Business Software Alliance by mid-November; actual entries due in March 1997. Contact Diane Smiroldo at 202/872-5500; fax 202/872-5501; or E-mail (DianeS@bsa.org).

Good Watching
An upcoming episode of "School Stories" focuses on how innovative teachers in a rural South Dakota high school use technology to inspire their students. "Plugging into Technology" airs December 8, 12:30 p.m. ET on The Learning Channel. "School Stories" is a production of NEA and The Learning Channel.

Internet in the Classroom
"Going to School on the Internet" offers information on optimizing the availability of Internet technology for use in the classroom. Topics covered include using the Internet in elementary and secondary classrooms, funding, training, and professional development. The full text is at (http://sunsite.unc.edu).

Online Wagon Trail
The Oregon Trail Online, running from January 20 to February 28, lets students hook up with an Internet wagon train and collaborate with other classes as they journey across the country. Enrolled educators get a guide for online and offline activities, with links to related language arts, science, and math sites. Enrollment fee: $95. Check out (http://www.mecc.com/ies/oto/oto.html) or call 800/375-0055.

H_NGM_N Online
Hangman, that perennial favorite, is now available as a shareware program. Subject files for different ages feature a list of words and related clues. Sir Hangman, the unregistered version of the program, can be downloaded from America Online, CompuServe, and Genie. The registered version can be ordered for $20 from the Public Software Library at 800/242-4775.

Friendly Users

Clear Vision for Success

Who:
Karen Peterson, technology coordinator, Peakview Elementary, Aurora, Colorado

E-mail address:
Kpetersn@ccsd.k12.co.us

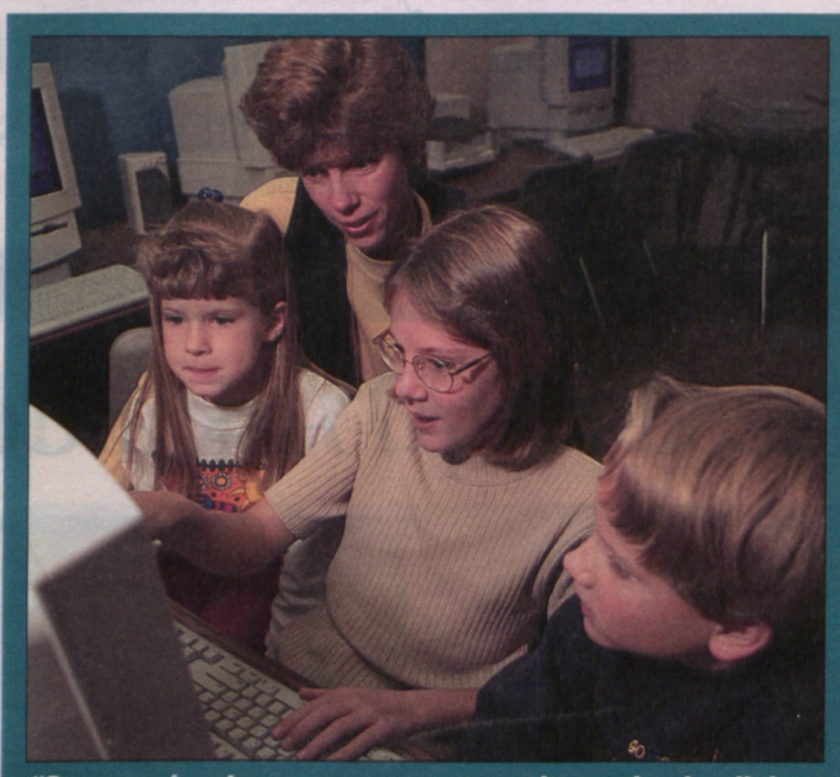
What:
Technology plays its part in teaching children cooperation and initiative as well as academic skills.

Inspiration:
"Peakview Elementary has six computers per classroom and has incorporated some of the latest technology into its curriculum. But it isn't a magnet or a special technology school. It was created in 1991 as the next new elementary school in our district.

"But during the planning stage the district administration gave the principal and the initial 12 teachers the charge to rethink elementary education. One of the most important questions we asked ourselves was, 'What do we want our students to look like as a result of being with us?'

"We wanted to develop the child as a whole, incorporating academic skills as well as skills like compassion and initiative. So we decided to include many types of reform, including multi-age groupings, special ed inclusion, and performance-based assessments.

"Then we decided to use the tools of technology to enhance and individualize our students' learning. We regarded technology as a resource, not as a separate subject that students wouldn't be able to transfer to their daily activities.



David Zalubowski

"Success is when you see everyone in a school collaborating and excited about learning," says Karen Peterson. "Technology can bring that out in all of us."

"Consequently, many basic classroom activities involve technology. As a replacement for textbooks, we chose materials such as interactive software programs, laserdiscs, and Internet activities. By using dollars traditionally spent on consumable materials, like workbooks, we're able to offer a lot of hands-on technology learning.

"A good piece of software can help reinforce a math skill or new science concept or help students re-evaluate their work. For example, HyperStudio, a multi-media program, gives our students the freedom to construct their own knowledge through project-based work.

"Our students gain initiative from project-based technology programs like these, making our school a community of learners who aren't dependent only on the teachers. And it's in that sense that technology works—it helps us achieve our vision.

Click:
"When technology is used throughout a school day as a learning resource that reinforces what teachers are doing, when technology moves us to different levels of educating children and changes the way we look at children and education, that's when I'd say that technology has been incorporated successfully into the classroom."

More About:
The "Teacher TV" episode "Integrating Technology—More Than an Electronic Blackboard" takes a close look at how Karen Peterson and her Peakview colleagues incorporated technology into their curriculum. To order videotapes ($15.95 for NEA members), call 800/229-4200. To ask about Peakview's annual Institute for Educators, call 303/766-1996.

Bytes for Beginners

How can you select the technology you need to help you meet your instructional objectives? Start with *Plugging In—Choosing and Using Educational Technology*, a publication of the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory.

An excellent guide to planning for technology, *Plugging In* is based on the premise that educational technology can only be effective to the degree that it advances engaged learning for students.

The book includes a list of indicators that can be used to measure technology's effectiveness, a way to plot the effectiveness of various technologies against a background of current research on learning, and policy issues the authors believe must be addressed to ensure success for all students.

You can get a copy ($5 includes shipping and handling) from the Council for Educational Development and Research (CEDaR), 2000 L St., N.W., Suite 601, Washington, DC 20036.

Click Here

Where's the Proof?

As school districts nationwide strive to make their school sites techno-savvy, some in the community may look at tightening education dollars and ask, Is it all worth it? A new report holds some revealing answers.

Last year, the United States spent $2.4 billion on education technology. Was it money well spent?
Technology does have an impact on student performance. And yes, there's data to prove it.

Some of the most convincing data can be found in *The Effectiveness of Technology in Schools '95-'96*, a report published by the Software Publisher Association. OK, the title may not be too exciting. But findings in the report itself are.

For one, students are shown to have greater self-confidence and self-esteem—and are more motivated to learn—when using computer-based instruction. And certain software—those that develop "cognitive strategies" such as paraphrasing and drawing analogies—give students a learning advantage.

Findings apply to students of all ages and skill levels (from preschool to college), with the most dramatic results occurring among special needs and low-achieving students.

For a copy of the report, send $25 plus $6.50 s&h to the Software Publisher Association, 1730 M St. N.W., Suite 700, Washington, DC 20036-4510. For a free copy, visit the Web site at (http://www.spa.org).

Computer-based education isn't anything new. What makes this new wave of technology any different?
The days when kids were left in a corner to do flash cards on an Apple IIe are gone. Two fundamental shifts in education and technology have influenced this change.

First, more sophisticated technologies have livened things up. The one-way information flow—teachers addressing groups of passive students—is gone. Now, with the Internet, multimedia, and networking, teaching is two-way, collaborative, and interdisciplinary.

Second, schools are avoiding the pitfalls of coupling access to valuable technology resources with outdated instructional methods. Credit this new approach, in part, to the fact that more teachers are familiar with the benefits of technology in the classroom. And increasingly, they're the ones going to a district to say they need it.

Why spend so much money on technology for schools instead of on traditional instruction methods that have worked in the past?
The United States spends $275 billion yearly for K-12 education—roughly 5 percent of the gross domestic product. So $2.4 billion of that, while a lot of money, isn't wildly dispropor-tionate, especially when you look at the long term.

The way companies conduct business today, especially with large-scale downsizing and the shift to an information-based economy, requires workers to be more flexible and better trained, particularly in the use of technology.

Businesses require schools to graduate students with a set of skills different from those needed earlier this century. Fewer businesses are teaching employees fundamental job skills—especially given that workers sometimes jump to competitors. Instead, they're expecting potential employees to come with the knowledge necessary to use technology.

Screen Shot

Richard Lederer's introduction to exposition.

Exposition is writing that informs or explains. In this type of expository writing, you will give information. Research reports, summaries, and explanatory essays are all forms of exposition. When you write any of these types of papers, the information you give should be factual.

Look at examples of types of

See the guidelines that will be used to evaluate your expository

Jot down any notes or ideas you come up with in your Prewriting Notes.

Richard Lederer on Exposition

Writer's Solution, an interactive writing program for grades 6-12, features a videodisc where real writers take students through the writing process, a writing lab (above), a language lab CD, and a source book with lessons. The components can be purchased as a classroom package ($995) or separately ($18-$239). To order, call Prentice Hall at 800/848-9500.

Web Winners

Online Development
Scholastic Marketing Resources offers staff development workshops online at (http://scholastic.com/EL/programs.html). Developed in partnership with corporate sponsors, past workshops have covered topics such as oral presentations and written reports.

New Voyage
The Scholastic Network, a subscription-based service, lets students engage in projects like reliving the voyage of the Mayflower and working with published authors. It includes an education-oriented Web directory for the Internet and filtering software that lets teachers choose levels of Internet access for their students. Individual accounts cost $199 per year; site licenses start at $1,995 per school. For more information, call 800/246-2986 or log onto Scholastic Network at (http://scholastic.com).

Free Whacks
With WebWhacker, you can download Web sites to your desktop. Go to (http://www.ffg.com/whacker.html) for a trial copy of this software, available for Mac, Windows 3.1, and Windows 95. This software will give you 10 free whacks.

Resources Galore
The Eisenhower National Clearinghouse homepage (http://www.enc.org) links to sites that have classroom-ready materials for teachers. It also links to the Resource Finder, a site that provides all types of curriculum resources for K-12 math and science; the Digital Dozen, where every month a new list of outstanding math and science sites is posted; online documents; and a variety of ENC publications and services.

Teasers and Maps
The Education Place (http://www.hmco.com/school/) features a Math Center with brain teasers, projects, and links to other math sites. A Language Arts Center has "Whacky Web Tales," a great exercise in using parts of speech to write stories, as well as links to other language arts sites. The Social Studies Center features downloadable outline maps and, to spur student interest, a game called GeoNet.

When 2.2 million people get together, it's bound to raise interest

Annual Percentage Yield (APY) accurate as of 8/21/96.

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First Interstate, TX	$2,500	2.27%
First Chicago, IL	$2,500	2.74%

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*As compared to those ranked by *Money* magazine, August 1996.

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balances of less than $500	4.64%
balances of $500 to $49,999	5.16%
balances of $50,000 or more	5.43%

The rates may change after the account is opened. Fees could reduce the earnings of the account. All other bank rates are accurate as of 8/21/96 and the rates may be higher for higher balances.

†*U.S. Banker* magazine, April 1996.

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Rights Watch

Sign of the Times?

The Supreme Court will decide if states can require school employees to speak English—and only English—on the job.

At issue is the legality of an Arizona ballot initiative declaring English to be the "official" language of the state.

Adopted in 1988 by a slim 50.5 percent majority vote, the law requires all public employees to write and speak English—and only English—while performing their government jobs.

The law applies to all public school employees in Arizona, although there is an exception permitting teachers to teach foreign languages as a part of the curriculum.

Immediately after the initiative passed, state worker Maria-Kelley Yniguez filed a legal challenge in federal court. Yniguez, who is bilingual, claimed that the new law prevented her from providing services to people who can speak only Spanish.

Hispanic state senator Jamie Gutierrez later intervened in the case, arguing that the law prevented him from communicating with his Spanish-speaking constituents.

The defendants argued that the English-only requirement "protects democracy" by encouraging unity and political stability, makes state workers more "efficient," and "promotes public confidence" in government.

Last year, the U. S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit struck down the new law, ruling that it violates the federal Constitution.

The court held that the law is overly broad, violates the free speech rights of public employees, and impairs the ability of Arizona residents to receive information from their state government.

The court said the ban on non-English speech was so broad that it would reach "teachers speaking in the classroom," bar schools from "issuing diplomas in Latin," and prohibit judges from saying "mazel tov" at weddings.

Relying in part on a 1923 Supreme Court decision striking down a state ban on teaching foreign languages, the court ruled that a state cannot "gag" its employees or force them to "remain mute before members of the non-English speaking public" who seek information about government benefits such as social security, welfare, housing, and voting.

Emphasizing that "this country has historically prided itself on welcoming immigrants with a spirit of tolerance and freedom," the court cautioned that "the state cannot achieve unity by prescribing orthodoxy."

Last summer, the U. S. Supreme Court agreed to review the Ninth Circuit's ruling.

The High Court's decision in the case, *Arizonans for Official English v. State of Arizona*, will have ramifications for the free speech rights of public school employees nationwide.

NEA recently joined People for the American Way, the American Jewish Congress, and other organizations in filing a friend-of-the-court brief urging agreement with the lower court decision.

And now Congress has entered the fray. Just last August, the House of Representatives passed the "English Language Empowerment Act of 1996," a bill requiring the federal government to conduct most of its business in English only.

Opponents of the legislation, including NEA, argue that it would ban bilingual education and English as a second language programs and prohibit teachers and schools from communicating with parents in languages other than English.

In a speech on the House floor, Speaker Newt Gingrich complained that California public schools now teach academic subjects in more than 80 languages and warned that this level of bilingualism will lead "to the decay of the core parts of our civilization" if the trend is not reversed.

Critics have noted that more than 97 percent of all Americans already speak English and urge that the best way to encourage immigrants to learn the language is not to ban other tongues, but to fund many more English-language classes.

The bill failed to pass the Senate in the just-ended 104th Congress. President Clinton had promised a veto, notes Dale Lestina, head of NEA Federal Relations.

—Michael Simpson
NEA Office of General Counsel

Resources

Supporters of legislation making English the nation's "official" language made some headway in the 104th Congress.

The U.S. House of Representatives recently passed the "English Empowerment Act of 1996." A nearly identical bill was introduced in the Senate by Richard Shelby (R-AL) and has found 20 co-sponsors.

"Those are our bills basically," says Betsy Hirsch, the media relations coordinator for U.S English, an organization working to make English the official language of the government.

And that's what has Khristie Goodman worried.

According to Goodman, communications manager for the Intercultural Development Research Association, English-only laws would have a number of harmful consequences.

"These measures," she says, "would change the way business is conducted in our courts, hampering non-English speakers from receiving a fair trial. Also, some of these policies would do away with bilingual education and, by prohibiting the use of other languages, drastically disenfranchise a number of citizens."

In place of English-only laws, Goodman proposes English Plus.

"We encourage people to learn a language other than English," says Goodman. "That way we celebrate both English and bilingualism, and, as the world gets smaller, those are the skills our children will really need."

For more information about English-only laws and how to fight them, contact the:

- National Education Association, Human and Civil Rights, 1201 16th St. N.W., Washington, DC 20036, 202/822-7700.
- National Association of Bilingual Education (NABE), 1220 L St. N.W., Suite 605, Washington, DC 20005, 202/898-1829. Ask for the English-only hotline.
- Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, 634 S. Spring St., 11th Floor, Los Angeles, CA 90014, 213/629-2512.
- Intercultural Development Research Association, 5835 Callaghan Road, Suite 350, San Antonio, TX 78228-1190, 210-684-8180. On the Web: http://www.tx.direct.net/users/idra.

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The Disney Channel

If you would like an application for the 1997 American Teacher Awards, write to The American Teacher Awards, P.O. Box 9805, Calabasas, CA 91372.

Preview available to subscribers in participating cable systems only.

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Heads Up!

TV Tips

Brand Spanking New Doug

The Disney Channel, beginning Saturday, November 2, 8:30-9:30 a.m., ET. This new Disney series features the continuing, whimsical adventures of 12-year-old Doug Funnie, cartoon hero for the average kid. Doug's adjusting to being an underclassman

Walt Disney Television

in middle school, having a new baby sister, and dealing with his secret crush, Patti Mayonnaise.

Smashed: An MTV News Special Report

MTV, Sunday, November 3, 4 a.m., ET. Hosted by Kurt Loder, this special explores alcohol's deep rooted presence in our culture, paying special attention to binge drinking. The show profiles young people who have struggled with alcohol abuse and are willing to talk about the effect heavy drinking has had on their lives.

Titanic

CBS, Tuesday, November 10, 9-11 p.m., and Tuesday, November 12, 9-11 p.m., ET. This new four-hour miniseries starring Peter Gallagher and George C. Scott melds fictional and true-life stories surrounding the sinking of the grand ocean liner Titanic.

Eyes in the Sky

Discovery Channel, Monday, November 18, check local listings. This program explores the way scientists use satellites in Kenya's Amboseli National Park to track elephants and prevent them from wandering out of the park's safe environment.

Smoke Alarm: The Unfiltered Truth

HBO, Monday, November 18, 7:30-8 p.m., ET. Made in conjunction with *Consumer Reports,* this show gives kids a clear picture of the methods the tobacco industry uses to get them hooked. Between animated and live action sketches, teenage smokers speak to viewers about their addictions.

Getting Physical

Court TV, Saturdays in November, 4 a.m., ET. An in-depth look at some of the early signs of abusive and violent behavior among teenage couples. Court TV interviews students, teachers, and a counselor who educates teenagers about what's acceptable behavior between boyfriends and girlfriends—and what's not. For support materials, contact: Courtroom Television Network, 600 Third Ave., New York, NY 10016, 212/973-2800.

Ghostwriter

Syndication, November, check local listings. A half-hour mystery series (photo below) that uses topical, moral, and social dilemmas to reach today's kids and promote literacy in an entertaining way. Includes high-tech graphics, music videos, state-of-the-art animation, and celebrity guests.

Storytime

PBS, November, Monday-Friday, check local listings. Designed to encourage young children to read, this show features guest celebrities reading popular children's books (photo above right). Hosted by Kino, a sneaker-clad puppet, and his real-life friends Mara and Lucy, the series also shows adults

how easy and rewarding it is to read to kids. For a book list, contact KQED Community Outreach, 4401 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90027, 213/953-5298.

Class of 2000

CBS, November, check local listings. Drawn from the stories of the teenagers who will graduate from high school in the year 2000 and their families, this series of short segments looks at America's problems and promise at the dawn of a new century. Internet chat rooms will be designed to enable teenagers across the country to share their thoughts and feelings.

The New Explorers: Slavery's Buried Past

PBS, Wednesday, December 18, 8-9 p.m., ET. In 1991, New York City construction workers unearthed a centuries-old slave graveyard. Scientists studying the skeletons discovered that slaves built early New York—and were worked to death in the process. This show documents the dig, research, and results.

How do you spell God?

HBO, December, check local listings. Inspired by the book of the same name by Rabbi Marc Gellman and Monsigner Thomas Hartman, this multimedia special speaks to children of many different religions, explores the similarities and differences between faiths, and talks about tolerance and spirituality.

KIDSNET, the computerized clearinghouse for children's electronic media in Washington, D.C., prepared this list of recommended programs.

School Stories

Forget the headlines about today's schools. Tune in to *School Stories,* a joint program of NEA and The Learning Channel, and take a look at what's really happening in America's classrooms. Here's the schedule.

The Drive To Teach

Sunday, November 3, 12:30 p.m., ET. To increase the number of minority teachers, the Savannah, Georgia school district set up a partnership with local universities giving school support staff the chance to become teachers.

Class Act: A Teacher Profile

Sunday, November 10, 12:30 p.m., ET. Rhode Island teacher Mary Lee Drouin loves to use her singing and theatrical talent to teach English literature. Watch this class act share her talent and passion for books.

Second-Chance High

Sunday, November 17, 12:30 p.m. ET. What happens when you mix high school students with criminal records, kids who've been expelled or who've dropped out, and older welfare recipients who are back in school to qualify for their checks? In Shreveport, Louisiana, the answer is learning—and the key is teaching to a variety of learning styles.

The Struggle for Safety

Sunday, December 1, 12:30 p.m. ET. In many Long Beach, California schools, it's an everyday struggle to keep local gangs away. Take a look at safety measures that give educators hope for the future.

Plugging into Technology

Sunday, December 8, 12:30 p.m. ET. With the help of a federal grant, a rural South Dakota school in one of America's poorest counties went hi-tech with computers and cameras. What's even more impressive is how a veteran teacher mastered the technology and now encourages other teachers to do the same.

BONUS: An added plus for NEA members: Each episode of *School Stories* is available on video (after it airs) with an additional 15 to 20 minutes of tips from the educators featured in the show. For details or to order, call 800/229-4200.

Heads Up

Free or Inexpensive

Building Parent Partnerships
A new title from NEA Teacher-to-Teacher Books, this book offers first-hand accounts of successful parent involvement projects, plus tips for building strong partnerships with today's families and involving those hard-to-reach parents. $12.95 plus s&h. To get the NEA member price of $9.95, use stock #2911-9-10-F. To order, call 800/229-4200.

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HENT1196

Earth Music

Mining for Music, a 22-minute video targeted for ages 5-18, teaches students not only about various mineral and rock mining operations across North America but about how everything we use comes from the Earth. Complete with a teacher's guide. $17 plus $3 s&h. A 23" x 35" poster is $3 more. National Energy Foundation, 5225 Wiley Post Way Suite 170, Salt Lake City, Utah 84116, 801/539-1406.

Science Sense

To help parents bring science to life for their children, Bayer Corporation offers the Making Science Make Sense Experiment Guide. Fun and instructional experiments on how colors separate, how to make play putty using regular household products, and more. Free. To order, send a self-addressed stamped business envelope to Bayer Making Science Make Sense, Bayer Corporation, One Mellon Center, 500 Grant St., Pittsburgh, PA 15219-2507.

Priceless Book

If you're a teacher and would like to get your hands on tons of free stuff, then you need the *1996-97 Elementary Teachers Guide to FREE Curriculum Materials.* This 366-page guide lists more than 2,000 free items—including charts, posters, booklets, teacher's guides, and more. And because it's thoroughly indexed, finding materials is a snap. $26.95 (includes a 15-day free trial basis) plus $3.95 s&h. Educators Progress Service, 214 Center St., Randolph, WI 53956, 414/326-3126.

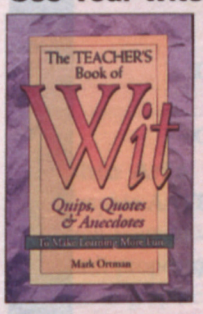
Fast Facts

Are your students looking for new ideas and fascinating facts on everything from earthquakes to dinosaurs to the Internet? Do they love solving puzzles, finding hidden words, or figuring out coded messages? If so, check out the *World Almanac for Kids 1997*. $8.95 plus $1.75 s&h. World Almanac

Heads Up

Books, K-lll Corp., One International Blvd., Mahwah, NJ 07495-0017, E-mail:Walmanac@aol.com.

Use Your Wits



Filled with more than 700 quips, quotes, and anecdotes, *The Teacher's Book of Wit* can help you set the tone for your lesson plans, add humor and inspiration to your newsletters, or drive home a point. $8.95 plus $2 s&h. Wise Owl Books, 1225 E Sunset Dr., Suite 373, Bellingham, WA 98226, 360/671-5858.

Starting Young

Many elementary school students lack access to health care, hampering their day-to-day school readiness. School clinics can help. A new report from the National Health & Education Consortium, *Starting Young: School-based Health Centers at the Elementary Level,* contains background, rationale, model programs, and more. $10 plus $2 s&h. NHEC, 1001 Connecticut Ave., N.W., Suite 310, Washington, DC 20036, 202/822-8405, ext. 50.

Safety Update

FYI: A Health and Safety Newsletter for School Employees is a free newsletter about issues including blood-borne diseases, asthma, and school violence. To subscribe, contact the Labor Coalition, 109 W. State St., Ithaca, NY 14850, 607/277-5670. E-mail address: 71112.503@compuserve.com.

Literature Online

You don't need to turn off the computer to get kids to read. In fact, as teachers Marilyn Jody and Marianne Saccadi discovered, computers can be the perfect tool to create a community of readers.

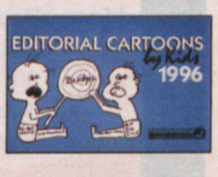
Their new book, *Computer Conversations: Readers and Books Online,* describes how the two educators are teaching with cyberspace. $16.95 plus $2 s&h. Just $12.95 plus $2 s&h for National Council of Teachers of English members. Contact NCTE, 1111 W. Kenyon Rd., Urbana, IL 61901-1096, 800/369-6283. Use stock #08113-0015. Ask for the book order department.

Education Unions

Social Justice Unionism: A Working Draft challenges us to create a "new unionism" that makes better, more equitable schools a priority. $1. NCEA, PO Box 679, Rhinebeck, NY 12572, 914/876-4580.

Editorial Cartoons

Want to know what kids care about? Check out *Editorial Cartoons By Kids (1996),* which features this year's win-



TODAY'S LESSON:
COOLING A HOT SITUATION.

More than ever, students today are being tested. Tested by their peers to fight, to give in to their anger, and to use their fists instead of their brains.

And now, the Metropolitan Life Foundation is offering a series of videotapes entitled **"Cooling a Hot Situation"** to teachers, administrators, and health educators.

Through dramatic situations, the tapes explore solutions to problems regarding violence and ways to eliminate conditions that lead to violence.

With the videos comes a Leader's Guide to help stimulate discussion where students express their ideas on how to cope in a potentially violent situation.

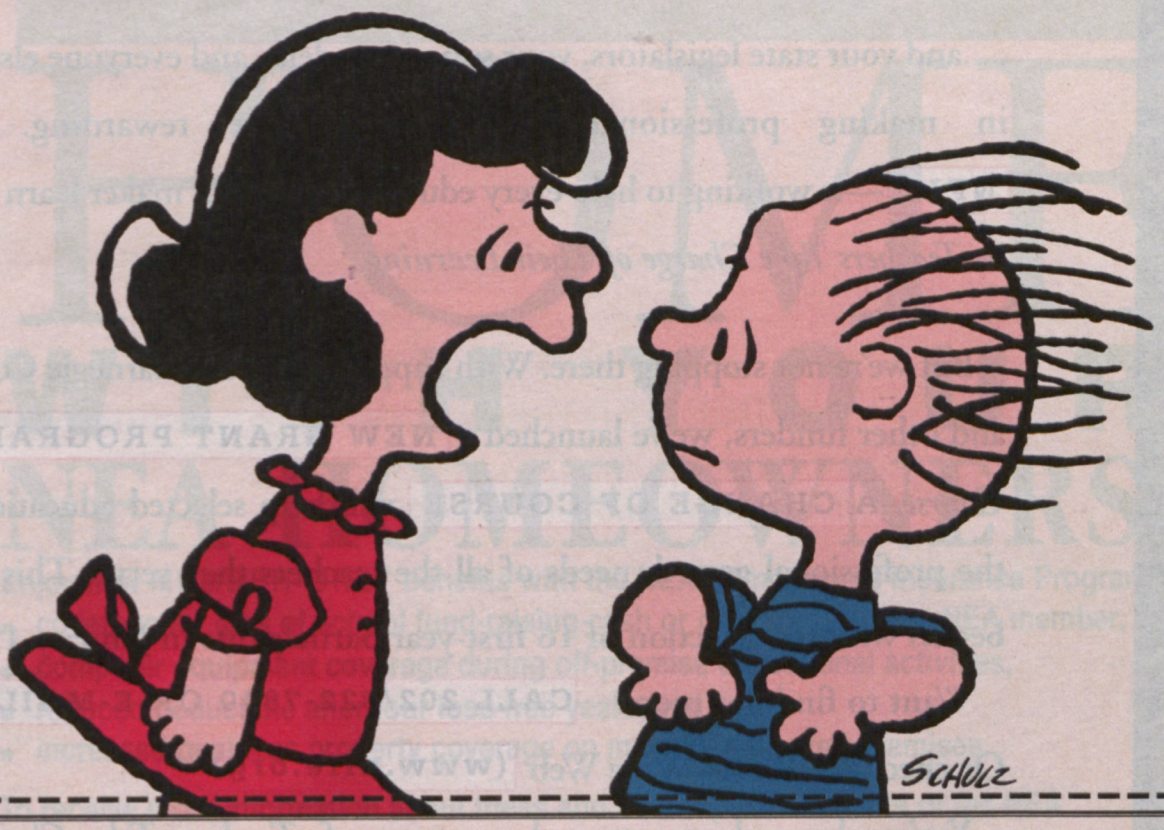
Two sets of videos are available, one directed to elementary school students and one to middle/junior high students.

Videotapes and accompanying guides are free.

It's all part of Metropolitan Life Foundation's commitment to reducing violence among young people.

Just fill out the coupon or send a fax to (212) 213-0577.

Metropolitan Life Foundation



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To order your **FREE** videotape and Leader's Guide set, complete this coupon and mail to:
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Health & Safety Education,
One Madison Avenue,
New York, NY 10010-3690
or send a fax to
(212) 213-0577

Name
Title
School
Address
City State Zip
Check One: ☐ Elementary ☐ Middle/Junior High

You told us the difference between good professional development and bad

Last year, the National Foundation for the Improvement of Education—the foundation created by NEA—asked educators across America to describe what they really need to develop professionally. You told us. You talked about the importance of time for regular interaction with colleagues. You emphasized the need for opportunities to learn about new technologies. You gave us enough thoughtful and varied IDEAS TO FILL A BOOK —and we have!

THAT BOOK IS *Teachers Take Charge of Their Learning: Transforming Professional Development for Student Success,* the ground-breaking National Foundation for the Improvement of Education report released this past July.

Now we're telling your governor

. . .and your state legislators, your superintendent, and everyone else who could play a role in making professional development more rewarding. Your foundation—NFIE—is working to help every education decision maker learn the lessons that appear in *Teachers Take Charge of Their Learning.*

But we're not stopping there. With support from the Carnegie Corporation of New York and other funders, we've launched a NEW GRANT PROGRAM called *A Change of Course.* A CHANGE OF COURSE will help selected education organizations fulfill the professional growth needs of all the teachers they serve. This exciting new program begins with the selection of 16 first-year participants in January 1997.

Want to find out more? CALL 202/822-7840 OR E-MAIL rganem@nea.org. Or check the World Wide Web (www.nfie.org)

You're also welcome to order a copy of *Teachers Take Charge of Their Learning: Transforming Professional Development for Student Success* (A701-00400-1) by calling NFIE Publications at 203/934-2669. The report is available for $15, plus shipping and handling.

The National Foundation for the Improvement of Education

nea
NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

working for you!

Heads Up

ners in the annual contest sponsored by *Newscurrents*. $10.95 plus $4 s&h. Contact Zino Press, P.O. Box 52, Madison, WI 53701, 800/356-2303, http://www.ku.com.

Grants

Graphic Arts

The Graphic Arts Education and Research Foundation invites educators to submit proposals for educational projects in graphic communications. Grants of up to $2,500 each will be awarded. Contact the Graphic Arts Education and Research Foundation, 1899 Preston White Dr., Reston, VA 22091, 703/264-7200, ext. 140.

Biotechnology

If you're a high school biology teacher interested in biotech research, the National Association of Biology Teachers will hook you up with an industrial partner and provide a stipend, software, on-line computer access, and a supply allowance. Contact the National Association of Biology Teachers, Attn: Kathy Frame, 11250 Roger Bacon Dr., #19, Reston, VA 22090, 703/471-1134.

Innovative Mathematics

If you have an idea about how to teach mathematics in a fresh, new way Toyota's Investment in Mathematics Excellence (TIME) may have $10,000 for you. Write to TIME, Attention: Eileen Erickson, NCTM, 1906 Association Dr., Reston, VA, 22091. E-mail: infocentral @nctm.org.

Science

Toyota also supports a science grant program, offering grants of up to $10,000 to 50 K-12 science teachers who propose innovative student projects in environmental education or physical science. The TAPESTRY grants deadline is January 22, 1997. For details, contact the Toyota TAPESTRY Program, 1840 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, VA 22201-3000, 800/807-9852. E-mail: pbowers@nsta.org.

Global Teaching

Want to "import" a foreign teaching practice that will work in your classroom? Apply for a Discovery Grant. Grants of $2,500 each are available for K-12 teachers. Contact Peter Moxhay, President, Best Practices in Education, 92 Exchange St., Portland, ME 04101, 207/780-1887. Fax: 207/766-2755. E-mail: moxhay@bestpracteduc.org.

Your Kids' Education

Looking for help in paying those college tuition bills? Horace Mann, the national insurance company, offers scholarships of as much as $20,000 to the children of public school employees. To qualify, students must have at least a *B* average and a score of 23 on the ACT or 1,100 on the SAT. For more information and an application, contact Horace Mann Scholarship Program, P.O. Box 20490, Springfield, IL 62708. Or check out the company's Web site at http://www.horacemann.com.

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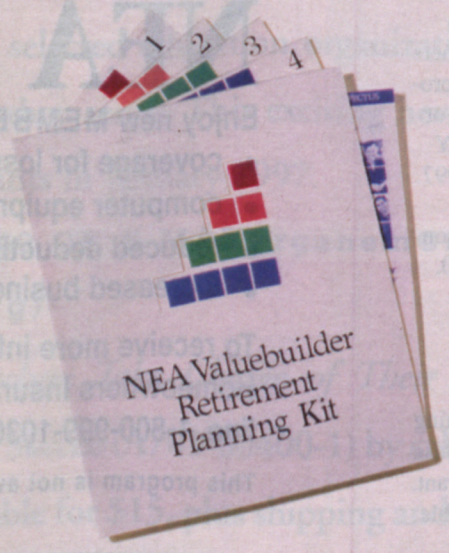

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In the Light Lane

Chuckles in the Classroom

When I taught fifth grade many years ago, we studied the American colonies. When discussing the Jamestown settlement, our text took particular note that many of the English colonists were sons of nobles and otherwise rich, and they were extremely reluctant to contribute any physical labor to make the settlement successful. They had come to find gold.

On the follow-up test, one of the questions asked what were those colonists who refused to do manual labor called. One bright miss had the perfect answer: "BUMS!"

Evelyn Kraut
Hollywood, Florida

I teach in a large high school. My colleague next door had a student who would always cut his fifth period class. He sent in a disciplinary referral to one of our administrators and wrote on it, "This student never comes to class."

He got the referral back the next day. The administrator had written on the bottom of it, "Send him to me immediately."

R. Wayne Ellis
Richmond, Virginia

I began an estimation lesson for my second graders by asking if anybody in the class knew what it means to "estimate."

One student raised his hand and announced, "I don't know exactly what the word means, but I do know that you should never try to estimate the power of a woman"—the title, he explained, of the book his mom was reading.

Lisa Fry
St. Peters, Missouri

In one classroom at my school, students must return their weekly progress reports each Monday, signed by a parent, in order to get recess that afternoon.

But Olivia had forgotten. She became upset and disruptive, and she was sent to her seat for a "timeout." After that, Olivia rummaged rampantly through her desk, then waved her hand in the air. When the teacher acknowledged her, Olivia anxiously stated, "I have it! I have my mommy's signature on my progress report!"

The teacher asked her to bring up the report. Sure enough, on the signature line, Olivia had printed, "Mommy."

Julia Hassloch
Lexington, Kentucky

"My penmanship has really improved since I switched to a laser printer."

Recently, I had a bad cold but went in to work anyway, as many of us do. As my eighth graders worked quietly on an assignment, I interrupted them with a sneeze. Many said, "God bless you." I thanked them. They went back to work, and soon enough they were again interrupted by more series of sneezes. Each time was followed by a polite "God bless you."

I couldn't help but notice the smile of the student who sat directly in front of me. Finally, I asked her why she was smiling. She told me that when a teacher sneezes and the majority of the students say, "God bless you," that means the teacher is well liked. But if a teacher sneezes and it's quiet, that means they don't like you.

So the next time you sneeze, listen well!

Manuela Gonnella
Bloomfield, New Jersey

In my sixth grade class in the San Francisco Bay Area, I frequently have students for whom English is a second language. This can sometimes lead to interesting misunderstandings.

Abdul had been out ill and had missed a homework assignment, so I explained what was expected: Write an appropriate opening sentence for suggested book titles, using either first person or third person as the title reflected.

Upon checking his work later, I discovered this suggested opening line to the book *Thomas Jefferson: Founding Father*:

"When Thomas Jefferson found his father, he was very pleased."

John Gunn
Fremont, California

Our school principal keeps a "goody box" in her office to encourage students to share their accomplishments with her.

I recently sent my kindergarten students to her with a list of basic sight words they could read independently. As they came back with their selections from her treat box, I asked one little guy, "Did you read them for her?"

He replied, with the innocence of a five-year-old, "She could already read them!"

Denise Blandford
Cottageville, West Virginia

While teaching some strategies for successful cooperative learning to my 4/5 class, I continued to stress the need for these skills in the "real world."

Several minutes into this lesson, a student raised his hand and asked, "Does that mean we're in the *fake* world?"

Susan McCarthy
Midland, Michigan

Missed Manners

For many years I served as an elementary school librarian in the Lansing School District. My 1969-70 teaching assignment included both Everett and Maple Hill elementary schools.

Unfortunately, early in the school year, I fractured my left cheekbone and needed an operation that required shaving a sizable spot on my head.

The wig I purchased to hide the hair loss did nothing to enhance my looks. Apprensive about the reaction of the students, I voiced my concern to the director of school libraries. She, in turn, must have contacted the principals at the two schools.

I don't know what these two gentlemen and their respective staff members said or did, but during the several months that I wore the unbecoming headpiece, not a single child ever commented on or even looked askance at my changed appearance—until the day that I staffed my library post minus the wig.

As I confronted a class of young students at the Maple Hill school, one little girl—still cautious re the "no mention the wig" taboo—whispered to me, "Oh, Mrs. Pekrul, you've got your own hair back on today. You look so nice again!"

Besides their customary teaching tasks, these wonderful educators had added manners, tactfulness, and compassion.

June (Pekrul) Fahlen
East Lansing, Michigan

Got Laughs?

Have a funny school story, anecdote, or vignette you'd like to share? You can send contributions to "In the Light Lane," *NEA Today*, 1201 16th St. N.W., Washington, DC 20036.
Fax: 202/822-7206
E-mail: NEAToday@aol.com

Or post your story in the "Recess" area of NEA's Web site (http://www.nea.org) or in the "Humor" topic on the NEA Teaching & Learning Message Board (keyword: NEA Teaching) on America Online.

People

Popular Mechanics

Al Spencer wasn't careful about what he asked for. But he was creative with what he got.

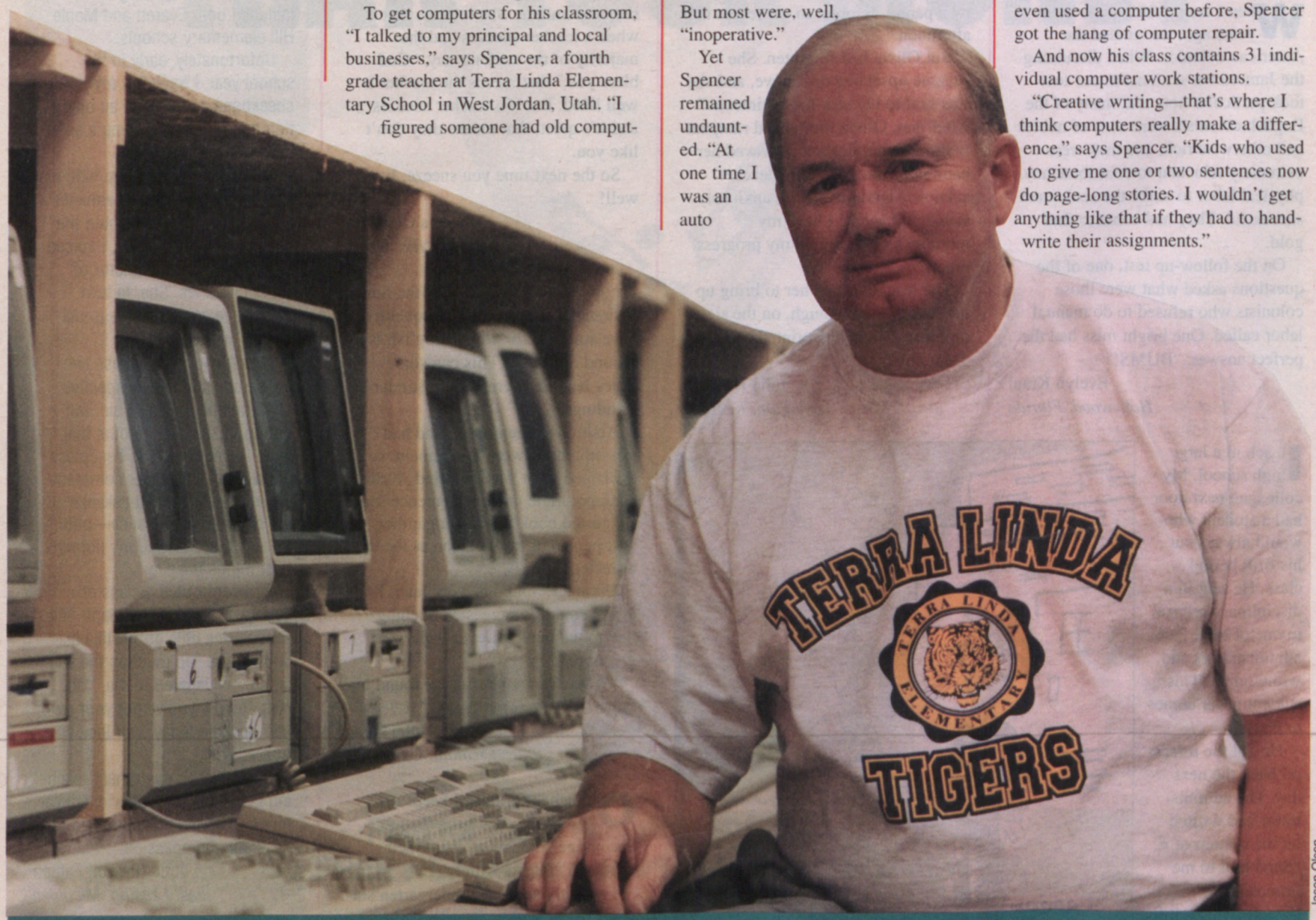
To get computers for his classroom, "I talked to my principal and local businesses," says Spencer, a fourth grade teacher at Terra Linda Elementary School in West Jordan, Utah. "I figured someone had old computers they'd be willing to donate."

He was right. In the end, he found a computer for each of his 31 students. But most were, well, "inoperative."

Yet Spencer remained undaunted. "At one time I was an auto mechanic," he explains. "So I began thinking of computers as the electric motors in cars." Though he'd barely even used a computer before, Spencer got the hang of computer repair.

And now his class contains 31 individual computer work stations.

"Creative writing—that's where I think computers really make a difference," says Spencer. "Kids who used to give me one or two sentences now do page-long stories. I wouldn't get anything like that if they had to handwrite their assignments."



Jason Olson

Kids Healing Kids

When a new oncology and radiology clinic was built near Holland, Michigan, **Bobbie Kearns** hit upon an idea to lift the spirits of the younger patients there.

Kearns, a music teacher for West Ottawa Public Schools, thought kids suffering from catastrophic illnesses would enjoy videotapes of children singing. So she formed "Kids Healing Kids," a volunteer choir of 230 students from Waukazoo and Woodside elementary schools.

"All children are welcome to participate," Kearns explains warmly. "It's an open enrollment policy." Together they've recorded dozens of songs of encouragement, creating a tape that's thrilled the clinic's director—and his young patients.

With help from parents, the district, and local businesses, Kearns distributes free videotapes to the clinic. The choir, which Kearns plans to expand to as many as 500 students, still rehearses weekly and makes new recordings.

"As we say at every show," notes Kearns, "'We have important work to do, and we make a difference.'"

Jennifer Giesey

Jay Hare

Enterprise **Energy**

When it comes to teaching community service, **Dorothy Youngblood**, an English teacher at Enterprise High School in Alabama, has one simple policy: Don't.

"I've worked with our student volunteer program, SAFE—Student Action for Education, for five years now," says Youngblood. "And I can tell you that these students don't need anyone to tell them how to help people. They have their own ideas."

During the past year, the 78 Enterprise students involved in SAFE have worked in mentor programs, gathered food and clothing for a homeless shelter, thrown a Christmas party for children with special needs, and presented awards to the members of the board of education for improving learning opportunities.

Given these accomplishments—which have earned Enterprise statewide recognition—perhaps the faculty adviser has played more of a role than she first acknowledges.

"I think my students are as enthusiastic as they are because I provide them with the freedom to pick their own course," Youngblood finally admits. "They bring the energy. I just channel it."

Over her 42-year teaching career, Youngblood has been inspired by seeing her students maintain that energy into their adult lives.

Among her former students are local doctors, lawyers, teachers—several on staff at Enterprise—and even the current mayor.

And what about her own energy level? "They tell me I haven't changed a bit," laughs Youngblood.

Herd the **Latest?**

If teaching kids can sometimes be like herding cattle, then it's a good thing for **Ella Kathryn Avery** that she spent 44 years in the classroom.

She's the sole operator of the Rafter A Ranch in Spiro, Oklahoma, with 900 acres and 400 head of cattle under her control.

Carrol Copeland

After more than four decades in Oklahoma's LeFlore County schools, Avery retired from teaching to work on the ranch she and her husband had lived on since 1946.

"I learned about ranching from helping James on weekends," she says. When her husband died in 1994, Avery decided to take over.

"It's a whole new ballgame," she says. "As sole operator, I have to make decisions like when to buy herd bulls and when to market calves." And instead of grading papers, she's baling hay and dealing with cows that get trapped in frozen ponds.

"My husband never advised me about what to do if anything happened to him," Avery muses. "But, as my nephew pointed out, he only would have advised me if he hadn't thought I was capable of making my own decisions."

Greenhouse **Effect**

For science teacher **Christopher Albert**, it wasn't enough that the new site for his middle school in Pennsylvania's Perkiomen Valley will include a historic farm and pasture as part of the deal.

Albert, who's earning a master's degree in environmental education, saw the 4.5 acre wetlands on the farm and spearheaded a plan to convert it into an Environmental Education Center.

"The kids and I cleaned up the wetlands area and worked on the dilapidated buildings," says Albert, who teaches at the current Perkiomen Valley Middle School. When the district ran out of money for the center, Albert coordinated a t-shirt sale with the school council and his class and raised $2,000.

High school and elementary students are collaborating to build a butterfly garden. Plans are in the works for a nature trail. And students will help refurbish the greenhouse so it can be used for classrooms.

But Albert sets his sights on more than academics, saying, "I'd like this center to be a place where teachers can just take their kids out and read in the fresh air."

Sabina Pierce

Money

Go Figure

We've all been taught that saving is a virtue, that putting away 10 percent of our salary should be a goal. But it's important to examine what "saving" can mean.

Most of us have very important demands on our money and are always thinking about balancing today's needs against tomorrow's. Under that constant pressure, it's easy to overlook some creative uses for your money that can bring great personal satisfaction—and are wise investments at the same time.

To decide how much you can spend now versus later, think about your goals and your dreams.

Spending money now "on yourself" isn't necessarily indulgent. Indeed, it can be an investment itself—an avenue to earning more money down the road. How many of these items have you thought of as an investment:

- College or graduate school for yourself
- Skills training
- Sabbatical
- Relocation
- Starting your own business
- Courses or activities that can lead to a second career or part-time career

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Of course, traditional expenses like taking time off to care for your children or saving for their college tuition are investments in the future as well. But there are other long-term investments that can be personally rewarding:

- Giving back: Charities or special projects
- A legacy or scholarship fund

Or you may be aiming for something more traditional, like a once-in-a-lifetime vacation or a beach house.

Regardless of your goal, instead of forcing yourself to save a specific portion of salary, think of your money as the tool to implement your dreams. Then weigh carefully what's important to you and what kind of lifestyle you want.

Saving shouldn't be pointless. The amount you tuck away should be determined by how much it will cost to fund those dreams that are somewhere down the road.

Decisions, Decisions

Saving Graces

Save, save . . . spend? Enjoying your money is part of the picture, too.

Jennifer Ashburn is well on her way to achieving her lifetime goals. Saving money is part of her plan. But Ashburn, a second grade teacher at Stratford Landing Elementary in Alexandria, Virginia, has the financial savvy to know that realizing your goals can mean spending money, too—on things that last.

We're always hearing that Americans don't save enough money. But today enlightened financial planners are telling clients that they should focus on using their money to implement their dreams.

"If you died tomorrow, what would you most regret not having done?" is a question George Kinder, a financial planner in Boston, asks every new client. "The central question that people should ask about their lives is, 'What does freedom mean to me?'"

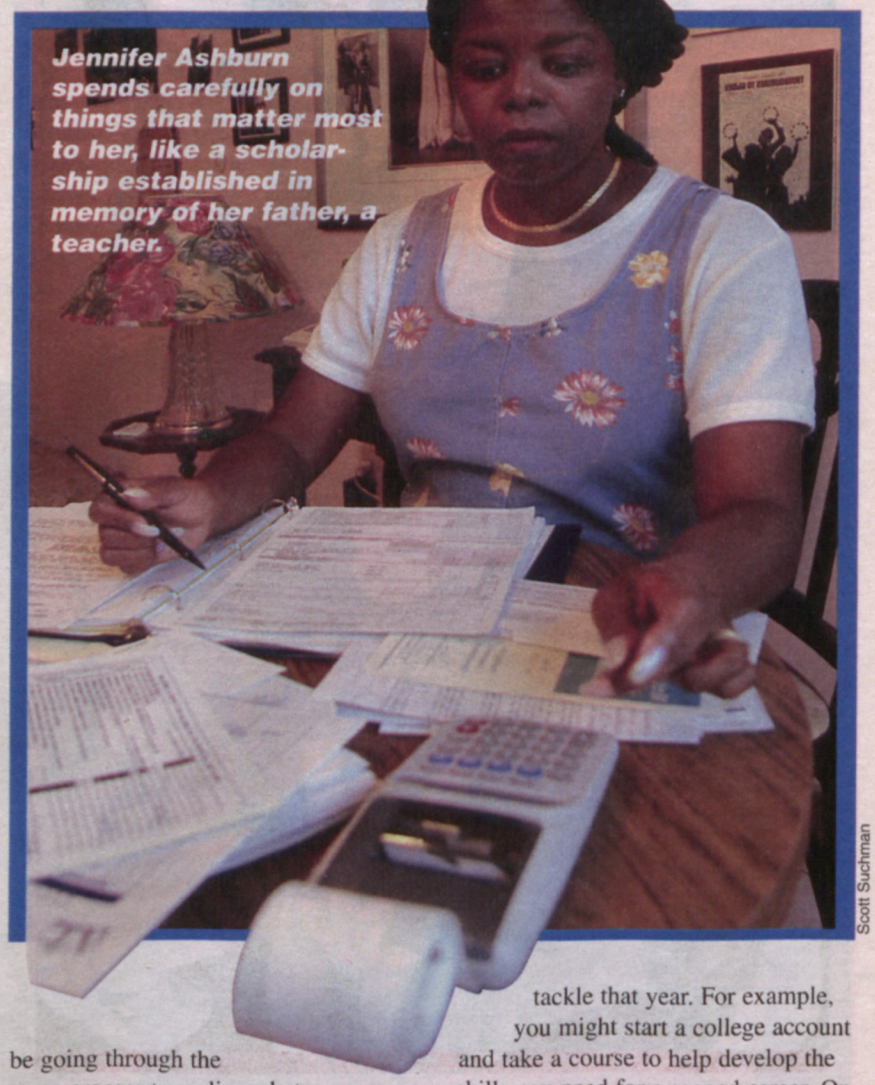
In 1980, Ashburn, 43, bought a home in Washington, D.C. She considers her $1,000 monthly mortgage payment to be part of an investment in herself.

Five years ago, she set up a mutual fund account and arranged to have $100 a month deducted from her paycheck to realize her dream: buying a beach house around Annapolis, Maryland. She now has more than $8,000 saved and is shopping for that house.

Luckily for Ashburn, her retirement plan will pay her 87 percent of her working salary in retirement, plenty to live on. But when she leaves teaching, she would like to do something that's equally meaningful with her second career.

To this end, Ashburn is developing her love for theater and the arts. She writes programs and plays for the Metropolitan Baptist Church in Washington and the National Council of Negro Women. And she began a performance tour with students from the Duke Ellington School of the Arts, which she ties in with a scholarship fund and breakfast to honor her late father, Richard Ashburn, a teacher at Sandusky (Ohio) High School.

Not everyone will have the same goals as Ashburn. But all of us should be going through the same process to realize whatever dreams we may have for the future.



Jennifer Ashburn spends carefully on things that matter most to her, like a scholarship established in memory of her father, a teacher.

Scott Suchman

The first step is to set long-term goals. Include everything that is important to you. For example, perhaps you long for a larger home, a vacation home, a retirement home. Add to the list whatever you plan to do for your children as well as your retirement plans.

Then each year set one short-term goal in each category that you will tackle that year. For example, you might start a college account and take a course to help develop the skills you need for a second career. Or you might get involved in a special project that will help you network and make contacts.

Putting money away to make your dreams a reality can be far more satisfying than setting a vague goal like "I'm going to save 10 percent of my salary."

Says Kinder: "You can achieve freedom if you set your mind to it and tackle your goals one at a time."

—Mary Rowland

Resources

- *The Price Waterhouse Personal Financial Advisor* offers tips on how to save for short- and long-term goals. It also helps you plan for the financial impact of life events, such as marriage, children's education, divorce, disability, premature death, and retirement. 370 pp. $15 from Irwin Professional Publishing.
- The Vanguard Planning Tools section on the World Wide Web (http://www.vanguard.com) provides financial planning features like a retirement savings calculator, a portfolio planner, and a "Personality Profile" that you fill out to help determine the financial course of action best for you.

Ready for Retirement?

It's Up to You

Pensions aside, your financial comfort will depend on how much you put away yourself.

Name: David Jerbi

Age: 40

Job: Physical education area assistant/athletic trainer, Prospect High School, Mount Prospect, Illinois

Home & Family:
Married with three young children; resides in Wheeling, Illinois

Years Until Retirement: 20-25

Current Challenge:
"I'm concerned about having enough money to live on when I retire. Will my pension be enough, or do I need something like an IRA (individual retirement account)?"

Options:
Most NEA members are enrolled in a pension plan. But to ensure you'll have sufficient income during your retirement years, you should start setting aside more money yourself. The earlier you start, the better.

A 403(b) plan, similar to a 401(k), is one of the best retirement plans for school employees. You have a portion of your salary set aside every year. That money is exempt from income taxes, and the earnings on your contributions are tax-deferred. You're taxed only when the funds are withdrawn.

You can make your contributions (subject to a ceiling that rises annually with inflation) through a payroll deduction plan. Your employer makes a contribution as well—usually some portion of every dollar you put in. The money is typically invested in insurance annuities and mutual fund shares.

Some people—especially those just starting out—avoid these plans because they "can't afford" them. But you gain so much in tax savings and free employer contributions that it's crazy not to join. Start small, if you must.

Individual retirement accounts (IRAs) are another excellent savings vehicle. You can deposit up to 10 percent of your earnings, or a maximum of $2,000 per year—then postpone paying taxes on earnings until you begin making withdrawals at age 59.

And if you make less than a certain amount ($25,000 if single, $40,000 if married), you can deduct your IRA contribution on your tax return.

IRAs are self-directed, which means you choose how the money is invested—CDs, stock, bonds, mutual funds, etc. You can make one lump sum annual payment, pay in small amounts during the year, or make no contribution at all.

Matt Kryger

David Jerbi needs to know how to invest today so there's enough money 25 years from now.

To put your IRA money in CDs, go to a bank, S&L, or credit union. For an annuity, you'd choose an insurance company. Fill out an IRA account form, send in the money, and you're up and running.

Homework:
Study your pension plan to get a complete retirement picture. Obtain an Individual Benefit Statement once a year—request one in writing, if necessary. Also, ask the employee benefits office for a detailed explanation of your pension plan.

The September "Ready for Retirement?" column noted that Medicare Part B covers prescription drugs, but only certain drugs are covered. Also, Medicaid will cover long-term care expenses of people with limited assets, as noted. But the cutoff point is low, and individuals should check far in advance to see if they qualify under their state's rules.

Educated Investor

Q. If you sell a two-family house, half of which is your primary residence, is the tax exclusion still $125,000? Do both husband and wife have to be 55 or older? Must you rollover the capital gain immediately? M.B. Newton, Massachusetts

A. A two-family house, half of which is a personal residence and half of which is rental property, is really two separate units, according to Jim Budros, a financial planner in Columbus, Ohio. "You must allocate between business use of the property and personal use of the property," Budros says.

You are entitled to the $125,000 exclusion on the portion that represents your personal residence, provided you have lived there for three of the last five years. One of the spouses must be at least 55 years old. And you need not roll over the capital gain at all.

Have a financial question that you've been pondering? It could appear in this column—with some great advice! Send your questions to Educated Investor, NEA Today, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. Fax 202/822-7206. E-mail NEAToday@aol.com.

Financial Finds

Monitoring Credit Cards
Bank Rate Monitor is an online service designed to help you find the best credit card rates in the nation—and avoid those companies that charge unwitting customers high "delinquent" rates if they miss only one payment. What banks have no penalty rates? Check out Bank Rate Monitor on America Online (keyword: Bank Rate) or its Web site at (http://www.bankrate.com).

Scholarships Everywhere
In *The Scholarship Book* (fifth edition), Daniel Cassidy lists more than 1,200 private sector scholarships ranging from $100 to $20,000, noting that some $3 billion goes unclaimed every year. A wide range of incomes, ages, and yes, even grade point averages can qualify for these funds. $24.95 from Prentice Hall.

Lighten the Load
Investor's Guide to Low-Cost Mutual Funds offers advice on—and a comprehensive directory of—no-load and low-load funds. This 225-page resource is published by the Mutual Fund Education Alliance, an association of the direct-marketed mutual fund industry. To order, send $15 to MFEA, Dept. 0148, P.O. Box 419263, Kansas City, MO 64193-0148.

Taking Stock
If you need more information on a stock before actually buying it, check out Hoover's Company Information Center on America Online (keyword: Hoover) and CompuServe. Hoover's Company Profiles offers descriptions on more than 1,750 publicly traded firms and up to 10 years of statistics. Each profile also hotlinks to the company's Web site.

Sparking Interest
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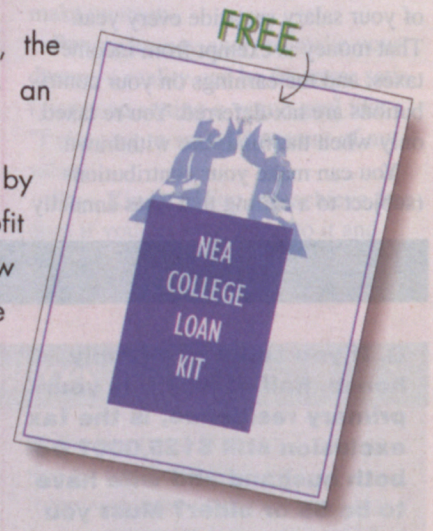

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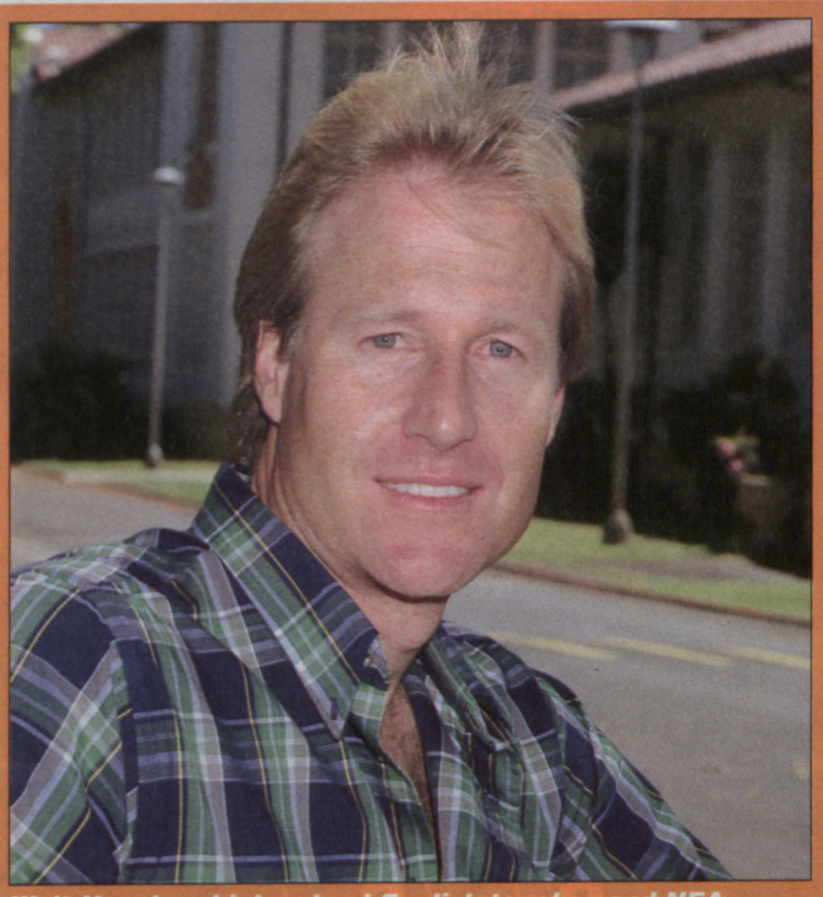
My Turn

The Flip Side of Paradise

Take a tour of a tough teaching assignment—in Hawaii.

By Walt Novak



Ray Tanaka

Walt Novak, a high school English teacher and NEA member in Hawaii, takes the waves as they come.

I live in a mellow community called Waialua. It's small, peaceful, and relaxed. But each workday morning for 12 years now I drive an hour to one of the most socially challenging, rough-and-tumble places I know.

People always ask me why I don't transfer to an "easier" community. I usually roll my eyes and shrug. This time I'll respond: My school is where I fit in, where I've evolved as an educator—kind of like Darwin's finches or Galapagos turtles. It's where I belong, without knowing why.

My school is less than half a mile from the deep blue Pacific. A terrific tropical mountain range encompasses our backside. The ocean contains yellowfin tuna and marlin. Within a five-mile radius lay some of the best waves in the entire surfing world. The mountains host pheasant and wild boar.

Needless to say, a lot of students hunt or fish. An educator can score tons of points by being knowledgeable in those areas, especially if he can weave wild tales starring the aforementioned critters. I've told so many fishing stories that some of them were even true.

Sounds like paradise, doesn't it? Then why does it have homelessness, violent crime, teenage pregnancy, broken families, drugs, alcoholism, and some of the perennially lowest SAT scores in America?

The best short answer to that question came to me—in analogous form—when reading an article about an educator who spent decades studying Native American culture in the Southwest. Here it is: The values of a Caucasian-dominant society aren't necessarily Hawaiian values—and a formerly proud heritage can be decimated when subjected to takeover.

So how does an educator succeed in a place where many students enter class troubled—instead of fortified—by their home life, with no breakfast, and little desire?

I don't know. I wish I had a snap answer, like "Be genuine!" or "Show concern!" or "Be fair!" But on some days, nothing works. For me, teaching highs are extremely high, but the lows are full-on rock bottom. Some days, I swear I feel like I couldn't have done worse if you paid me. Other days, I leave work thinking I must surely be an educating messiah.

I will say this: Teaching at my school is never—I mean never—dull. And I've learned a few tricks.

Hawaiian is a notoriously oral, tale-telling culture. I teach eighth grade English, so we do a lot of oral reading in my classes and ham it up like crazy. I rarely teach the "The Classics," but rather, what I consider to be the best in adolescent literature. I make sure the lit heroes are teenagers, preferably 17-ish, as eighth graders idolize that age.

I do dramatic readings regularly—I've got certain passages rehearsed, down cold, with full emoting and dialect. My main objective is to make "that novel stuff" come alive. Only then will my students feel that it's meaningful. Only then will they try.

On the first day of school, I always ask the same questions. Ninety percent of my 8th graders don't know whose face graces the nickel, how many years ago Christ lived, or the name of the current vice president.

But, what I find especially troubling is that they can't tell you the city, state, and country in which they live. For "country" they nearly always answer with the name of their village. All their lives they've heard island residents refer to their rural village as "country" and Honolulu as "town."

Provincialism is an enormous enemy of mine, something I constantly butt heads with. The pervasive attitude is that this little drop-de-terre in the middle of the Pacific is the entire world. I employ personal experiences, the globe, cultural anecdotes, the newspaper, and adolescent literature heroes to emphasize that Oahu is not. We aren't the world, just part of it. Life is large—but the water is wide.

Someday my students will cross. To encourage them is why I'm here.

Walt Novak's novel about teaching in Hawaii's public schools, The Haole Substitute, *is being made into a movie.*

You Said It

A few weeks ago, Rich Kronberg, a member of the NEA Board of Directors from Alaska, called. A couple of members had asked him how we know what readers like or dislike about *NEA Today*. He wanted to know if we have any way—other than letters or phone calls—to gauge reader opinion.

Bill Fischer, editor

In case you were wondering that, too, here's some of the information I shared with Rich.

Each year, since *NEA Today* began in 1982, we've surveyed our members. First NEA Research selects a representative sampling of NEA members. Then a polling firm calls members and asks a lot of questions about their reading habits when it comes to *NEA Today*.

We tinker with the survey from year to year, but we always ask a couple of basic questions: How much time do you spend reading *NEA Today*, and what portion of *NEA Today* do you read?

So how does *NEA Today* stack up on these measures? Though there are slight dips and jumps year to year, survey results show that 60 percent of you spend 30 minutes on each issue of *NEA Today*, and average readers read more than 50 percent of the stories in each issue.

Those are good numbers for any publication. Still, our surveys show that some NEA members don't read much of *NEA Today* at all. With our new editorial and graphic design, we're out to change that.

Don't forget to vote on this month's Debate question on page 43. Last month's vote tally appears below.

Bill Fischer

Your Opinion

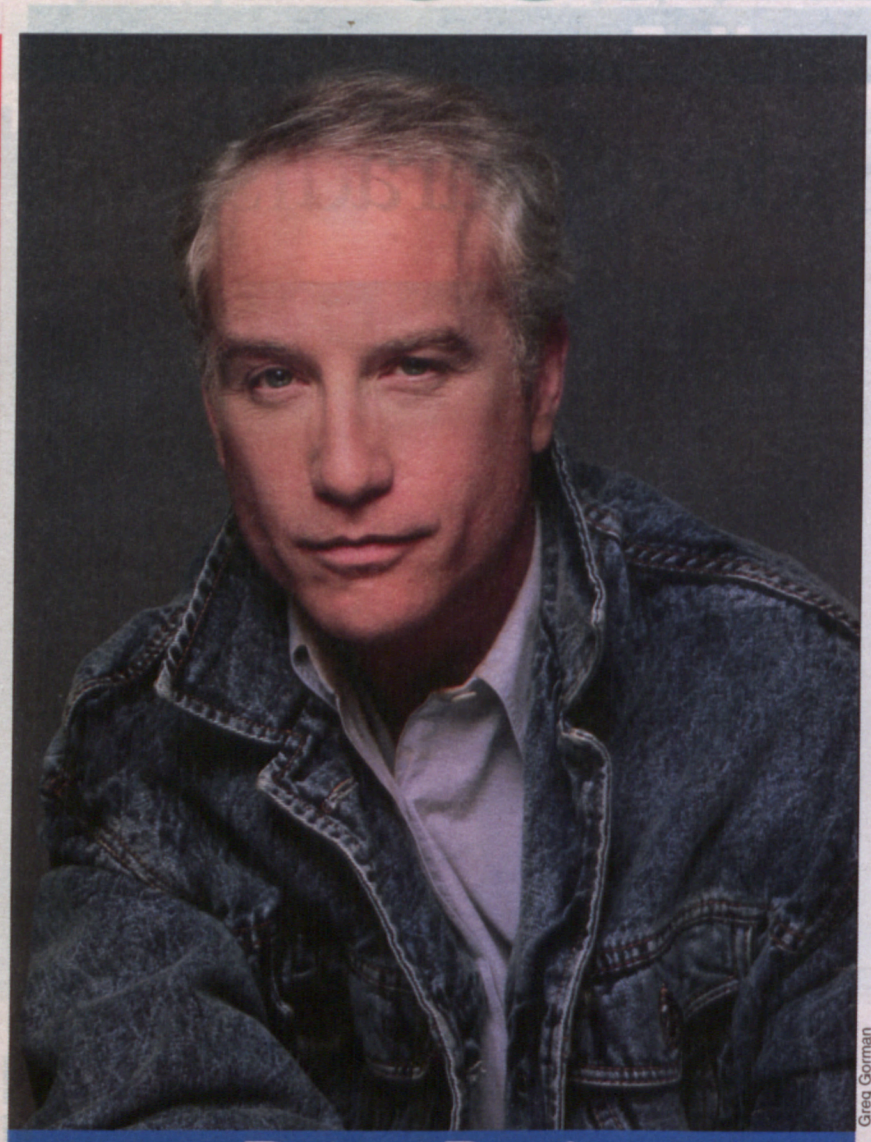
Last month's Debate question:

Should you confront a colleague who isn't performing?

You Said It:
62% Yes
38% No

To respond to this month's Debate question, see page 43.

Meet



Greg Gorman

Richard Dreyfuss

After the Opus

It was his role as a dedicated music teacher felled by the budget ax that ignited actor Richard Dreyfuss's passion for arts education and vaulted him into the spotlight as a leader in the fight for arts funding.

But you know that. What you may not know is that Dreyfuss was a community activist long before the success of Mr. Holland's Opus. *In 1991, he helped launch LA Works, a clearinghouse that matches volunteers to tasks in the community—like tutoring, cooking, building, and planting—that need to get done.*

NEA Today *staff writer Diane Dismuke recently met Dreyfuss in a Studio City, California deli and chatted with him over a couple of iced teas.*

What's the most important message of *Mr. Holland's Opus*?

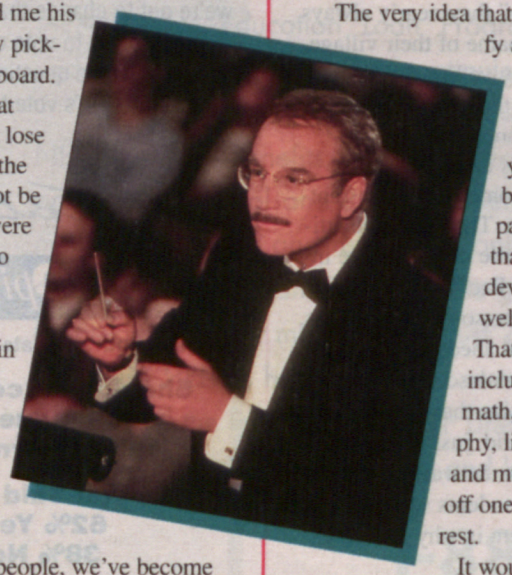
Cut to the nub, it's this: The only way that schools in this country are going to be saved is if there's a real civic activism on the part of parents, teachers, and school boards. People can't just sit back and say, "Oh, that was a nice movie." They have to go to the meetings, vote with their feet and mouths, and keep the money in the pipeline.

Why has *Mr. Holland's Opus* been such a success?

Two reasons. First, all of us share an inkling of doubt about our lives: Have we taken the right path? Did we do the right thing? Second, all of us over a certain age have memories of powerful teachers who have shaped our lives, but whose impact has been obscured by the passage of time.

Have you heard from teachers in Mr. Holland's position?

I've heard from many—including some of my former teachers! One teacher told me his students actually picketed the school board. They insisted that their teacher not lose his job and that the arts programs not be cut—and they were successful. So, to teachers in Mr. Holland's position, I say hang in there.



Why is arts education so important?

I think that as a people, we've become neurotic. For a variety of reasons, our present culture is a one where we perceive things through a distorted lens. We're paranoid. We're reactive. And we don't see things in balance.

The very idea that one has to justify arts in education is an aspect of that neurosis. For thousands of years, art has been accepted as part of the training that goes into the development of well-rounded minds. That training includes science, math, history, geography, literature, and art and music. If you cut off one, you cripple the rest.

It would be as self-destructive and ludicrous to stop teaching science and math as to stop teaching art and music.

Why did you establish LA Works?

I wanted to tap the volunteer spirit that I knew was out there—and do something to improve the quality of life in this city.

I found an enormous desire on the part of so many people to do something worthwhile—if you just tell them where to go to do it. So what we did was try to thread the needle—to match up the people who needed something done with the people willing to do it.

Now, each month, LA Works puts out a calendar that lists many volunteer opportunities—and those with time and talent to donate can pick and choose. They can help feed the homeless, teach arts and crafts to kids in shelter, or help refurbish a local medical clinic.

We even help organize projects for corporations that want to provide opportunities for their employees to volunteer.

What happened on LA Works Day in June?

We held a city-wide workathon and fundraiser devoted exclusively to the schools. More than 2,500 volunteers from some 30 volunteer projects renovated, landscaped, painted, and cleaned Los Angeles public schools.

In the past five years, LA Works has mobilized more than 7,000 volunteers who tutor children, build day care centers, clean up graffiti, feed the hungry, and more.

Do you have any memories of your own school days?

Because of a very bad math experience, I thought I was a complete dunce. I'm the only kid who got out of Beverly Hills High without the required geometry course because my teachers knew I'd never get it in a million years. Since then I've realized that, of course, I'm not an idiot. I just had a few teachers who didn't know how to impart the delight that's to be discovered in math.

Teachers should learn to emphasize the delight in the process of knowing. There is a kind of sensual pleasure in learning something. And that can be taken from class to class to class.

Why do you think so few movies and TV shows portray teachers in a positive light?

I don't know that that's true. There are many shows that do portray teachers in a positive light. *Welcome Back, Kotter* was a great story about a teacher. In the '60s and '70s, there were a couple of good TV series—*Mr. Novak* was one.

I don't think teachers are portrayed badly. I think they aren't portrayed enough, perhaps. But when they're portrayed, they're portrayed with dignity.

Do you want to be a teacher?

Yes, in fact ever since I was 12 years old, I've wanted to be a history teacher—and I will be one some day. Although *Mr. Holland's Opus* made me realize I don't have the energy necessary to teach high school kids, I'll no doubt find a way to teach undergraduate history someday.

For More

- For those in the Los Angeles area who want more information, contact LA Works, 351 South La Brea Avenue, Suite 202, Los Angeles, CA 90036, 213/936-1340.
- For those who haven't seen *Mr. Holland's Opus* yet, the video will be available November 1.

Debate

Should there be a dress code for school staff?

Yes

Thuy Pham-Remmele is an ESL/bilingual teacher for K-12 students in Madison, Wisconsin. Over the last 20 years, she's spoken at many conferences on ESL-bilingual methodology and Southeast Asian cultural and educational issues.

To dress professionally requires class, pride, and some effort. Not to dress professionally shows carelessness and a lack of respect both for yourself and your profession.

In my school district, I've seen male teachers wearing tank tops, frayed shorts, earrings, and long hair held back by rubber bands. I've seen female teachers wearing low-cut tops, leotards, and skirts so short that it's downright indecent when they bend over to pick something up. I've seen some teachers who wear clothes that look like they've been slept in.

If this is the norm in most schools, we're in big trouble. We're professionals, entrusted with the job of educating our country's next generation—and public image is an integral part of our job.

All day long, we're in the public eye—conducting classes, interacting with colleagues, conferring with parents. All day long, we're leading and setting examples for our students.

We're not freelance artists who can lose themselves to uninhibited inspiration and artistic freedom. We're educators, and, on a daily basis, we have more contact with children—and often more influence on them—than their own parents do.

So it's important that we have a dress code. We certainly don't need uniforms, three-piece suits with ties, or high fashion dresses. But we do need minimum standards.

A few reasons why:

■ While it's true that first impressions are important—remember how you dressed when you interviewed for your job?—maintaining our professional image is even more critical. Our dress reflects our personality and our values. It's important that we send the right message.

■ We're role models. Children notice what we wear, and many try to emulate us. What kind of role models are we when we dress like slobs or hippies in ripped jeans and t-shirts?

■ The way people dress does, on occasion, affect their behavior. That's why we would never dress for a wedding or a place of worship the same way we would dress for a picnic or a beach party.

■ There should be no double standard. We tell children they can't come to school wearing t-shirts bearing offensive messages or come to class wearing hats. We should certainly apply much higher standards to ourselves.

■ Our students have enough distractions. Middle and high school students have enough hormones racing through their bodies. The last thing they need to see is revealing clothing on school staff.

■ The way people dress does, on occasion, affect how others behave around them. I know a school secretary who commands such respect from co-workers, parents, and students that everyone automatically behaves around her.

The lady dresses with such propriety that people hardly remember what she's wearing. And that's as it should be. Professional attire should help us do our jobs.

Other professionals—doctors, lawyers, business people—go about their daily work in professional attire that delineates their jobs and, at the same time, commands respect. We should do the same.

No

Cathy Harrison teaches second grade at Lithia Springs Elementary School in Douglas County, Georgia. She's also taught remedial language arts and remedial math. Harrison earned her teaching credentials after her oldest child started school.

Yes, we're professionals. But we're not doctors, lawyers, or business tycoons—and we don't have to dress like them.

We have to dress in ways that allow us to be the best educators we can be. A dress code would, for many of us, make that impossible.

■ Case in point: One afternoon, I was wearing a cream-colored sweater, a starched blouse, and wool pants (dry clean only). My class was doing a science experiment that had to be performed on the floor.

Before I got down on the floor, I had to take time to clean it. And during the experiment I continued checking to see that my clothes were clean. When my students came to share their enthusiastic observations with me, I had to take time to make sure their hands were clean.

When it comes to teaching, time—even a few minutes here or there—is a precious commodity. I can't afford to waste time worrying about getting my clothes soiled. And I can't afford to take even one minute away from the time I should be teaching.

■ Case in point: I like to dress in ways that help my students focus on what we're learning. For our ocean unit, for example, I wear a jumper adorned with sea monsters, fish earrings, and seashell shoes.

I also have a transportation jumper, a space dress, a Christmas jumper, a Native American costume, and apple, dinosaur, and watermelon outfits. Needless to say, I have a lot of theme clothing that I like to wear.

Parents have told me that their children search the house for something to wear that's related to the themes we study. I've found that the more students are involved, the more excited they are about learning. And theme clothing is a great way to get children more involved.

This opportunity would be lost if students and teachers had to wear uniforms or teachers had to wear business-type attire.

■ Case in point: Fridays are spirit days at my school. We wear school t-shirts, jeans, and sneakers. I look forward to Fridays so I can play kickball at recess with my class. Not dressing the part would put a damper on my spirit—and my ability to join my students in outdoor activities that are both fun and educational.

■ Case in point: I enjoy sitting on the floor during sharing time, lying on the grass while cloud watching, leading exercises during music and movement. I couldn't do these things if I had to wear a business suit.

■ Case in point: My students are affectionate. But when I'm dressed up, I don't want them close to me with sticky hands. When that happens, I miss valuable opportunities to get to know my students better, and I can't take advantage of "teaching moments."

Now don't get me wrong: I'm not arguing for short skirts, low necklines, or clothes that are too tight. I'm not in favor of wearing jeans to parent conferences or special programs. And I believe visitors should be able to distinguish between students and teachers by what they're wearing.

But a dress code won't lead to instant "professional" status. Doing our jobs well will. We need the freedom to dress for success—for the success of our students, that is.

Give Us Your Opinion

Which debater best reflects where you stand? To agree with the "Yes" side, send an E-mail message to **vote-yes@neatoday.nea.org.** To record a "No," address your E-mail to **vote-no@neatoday.nea.org.** Please note your message subject as **NEA Today November Debate.** Vote by November 12. *NEA Today* will present the tally in our next issue.

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Conferences

NOFAS 1997 National Teen Summit. The National Organization on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) will host a national teen summit in May 1997 focusing on peer education and training. The purpose of the summit is to raise awareness of FAS among the teen population nationwide and to encourage healthy lifestyle choices. Between 100 and 150 ninth and tenth graders will be selected by Washington DC Teen Advisors through an application process. To find out more about the Summit, application process and selection criteria, or to get more involved, write to NOFAS, ATTN: Teen Summit, 1819 H Street, NW, Suite 750, Washington DC 20006. Or call 800/66-NOFAS (in DC Metro Area call 202/785-4585).

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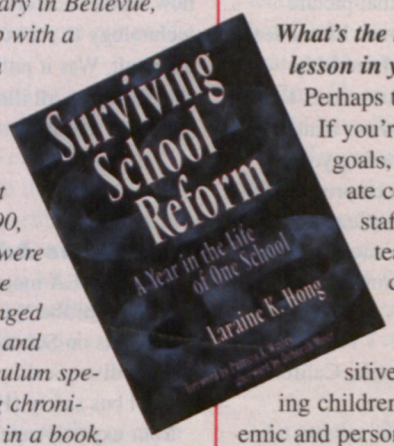
Books

Weathering the Storm

A school's reform plan encounters opposition, but a tale of survival emerges.

Surviving School Reform: A Year in the Life of One School
Laraine K. Hong. *Teachers College Press, 196 pp., $21.95.*

In the late 1980s, educators at Jefferson Elementary in Bellevue, Washington came up with a plan—complete with multi-age classes and a new location—to revamp their school. While it hit a big snag in 1990, most of the reforms were implemented, and the school is now a changed place. NEA member and language arts curriculum specialist Laraine Hong chronicled that tough year in a book. She spoke about it recently with NEA Today's *Dax Oliver.*



Why did you write this book?
I hadn't planned to write a book, but after the 1990-91 school year, I wanted some record of events that would remind us of what we had lived through, inspire other schools, and provide practical suggestions about what true reform takes. I also hoped that policy makers might read my account and learn that simply issuing standards and creating strategic plans makes little difference if there is no appreciation of the circumstances that determine whether and how students learn.

What's the most important lesson in your book?
Perhaps that conflict isn't fatal. If you're clear about your goals, you'll be able to mediate conflict, both within the staff and without. For teachers, this requires continual learning, working closely with colleagues, being sensitive to parents, and making children's welfare, both academic and personal, your first priority. Parents should understand that the best interests of their own children are served when a school is working for the best interests of all its students.

What's the future for reform?
I think education in this country has gone too far forward to lapse back into old ways. We've seen significant changes in math instruction, literature-based reading, integrated studies, and, especially, process writing. Still, until we can say that we are truly providing equal educational opportunities for every child, the promise of school reform remains unfulfilled.

Books by NEA Members

Under the Mermaid Angel

Martha Moore. *Delacorte Press, 168 pp., $14.95.* In this young adult novel, 13-year-old Jesse learns life lessons when Roxanne, 30, moves into the trailer next door.

Casimir Pulaski: Soldier on Horseback

David Collins, illustrations by Larry Nolte. *Pelican Publishing Company, 96 pp., $14.95.* A biography of this Polish patriot, one of the most important officers of the American Revolution.

The Black Bonnet
Louella Bryant. *The New England Press, 160 pp., $12.95.* This novel for middle school students tells the story of two slave sisters who make a run for freedom on the underground railroad. The time: 1858. The place: a stop in Burlington, Vermont.

NEA Professional Library Top 10 List

1 Student Portfolios. NEA Teacher-to-Teacher Books. ($9.95) Insights from your colleagues on how to use portfolios to assess and enhance student learning. (#2901-1-10-FB)

2 Toward Inclusive Classrooms. NEA Teacher-to-Teacher Books. ($9.95) Six stories that show how students with special needs can learn with their peers. (#2903-8-10-FB)

3 Innovative Discipline. NEA Teacher-to-Teacher Books. ($9.95) Elementary and secondary teachers say these discipline strategies can improve the whole culture of your school. (#2904-6-10-FB)

4 Time Strategies. NEA Teacher-to-Teacher Books. ($9.95) These teachers show how block scheduling and other methods of restructuring school time can enhance reform efforts. (#2902-X-10-FB)

5 School-Based Change. NEA Teacher-to-Teacher Books. ($9.95) Tips, tricks, and techniques for avoiding the pitfalls of school restructuring. (#2905-4-10-FB)

6 Multi-Age Classrooms. NEA Teacher-to-Teacher Books. ($9.95) Six examples of how mixed-age groupings inspire teachers to innovate. (#2907-0-10-FB)

7 Beyond Textbooks: Hands-On Learning. NEA Teacher-to-Teacher Books. ($9.95) Learn how to find the "teachable moment" in real-world activities. (#2906-2-10-FB)

8 Integrated Thematic Teaching. NEA Teacher-to-Teacher Books. ($9.95) Six stories from teachers who are successfully interweaving disciplines into a tapestry that makes the curriculum come alive. (#2909-7-10-FB)

9 Multiple Intelligences. NEA Teacher-to-Teacher Books. ($9.95) Find out how your colleagues are adapting their teaching strategies to take advantage of the seven intelligences. (#2910-0-10-FB)

10 Building Parent Partnerships. NEA Teacher-to-Teacher Books. ($9.95) Get this book if you want to explore new ways to involve today's families in children's learning. (#2911-9-10-FB)

This month's list shows how the 10 Teacher-to-Teacher Books rank in total sales since the inception of this innovative publishing venture a few years ago. All the books listed above are published by the NEA Professional Library, a service to all 2.2 million NEA members financed solely by the sale of books and other professional development materials to the education community.

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Letters

Values Education

In "Your Vote, Their Future" (Cover story, October), you state that the Parental Rights and Responsibilities Act will make it almost impossible to report cases of child abuse by parents. But what you leave out leaves readers duped.

Many parents back the Act because some school districts ridicule the values held by many families by refusing to let parents examine curricula, pull their children out of sex education classes, ask questions, or make comments. NEA should help pass this bill—and cure some of the "child abuse" that goes on in a few school districts as a result of biased teachers and administrators.

Richard Slater
Camano Island, Washington
slater@halcyon.com

Consider It Done

Thanks for the concise article about National Board certification (Inside Scoop, October). I hope NEA continues to highlight Board certification as a powerful professional development process for experienced teachers.

Judith Rohde
Maplewood, Minnesota

Editor's note: In this same article, Board certified teacher Kathleen Reeves was incorrectly identified. NEA Today *regrets the error.*

Collectors, Beware

I like your new format, particularly "School Day Smiles" (In the Light Lane, October). But I feel compelled to pass on a warning.

You included one anecdote about a child bringing a bird's nest to kindergarten. When my son was in kindergarten, a girl in his class died as a result of a disease contracted from a bird's nest. An adult in our town was rendered almost totally blind from cleaning bird's nests from gutters.

I think it's imperative that teachers be aware of the hazards of children collecting bird's nests.

Judy Reall
Trout Creek, Montana
tfl4052@montana.com

What Training?

I'm appalled at your picture of a school secretary tending to a sick child (Innovators, October). It seems the secretary helped develop a training program that grooms support staff to replace me as a certified nurse.

Does this program teach the courses I took in college—anatomy, physiology, biochemistry, physics, nutrition, microbiology, pharmacology, and psychology? Do the people who earn this certificate have years of hospital experience, as I and my school nurse colleagues have? Can they recognize drug interactions and adverse drug reactions to the medications they are now certified to administer?

This program appears to have NEA's blessing. Just one more question: Will NEA be there to help me when I'm replaced by a support staffer?

Debbie Kahn, R.N.
Mount Laurel, New Jersey

Passing Praise

As a life member since 1968 and a public school educator for 40 years, I'm impressed by your new format. I especially enjoyed "Talk Back" (Cover story, September), as I've echoed Colorado teacher Frank Mosher's words throughout my career.

The four items under "Facts To Keep at Your Fingertips" should be clipped by every teacher and administrator in the field. We must end the many comments that lead off with "when I went to school."

Gerald Silverman
Andover, Massachusetts

I think that Frank Mosher has a good idea. If we can establish a dialogue with people without being defensive or offensive, we will be more successful in spreading the good word about public schools.

I try to tell folks what my day is like, and I always invite them to come to my classes to find out what's going on. Most teacher bashers haven't been in a school in years—they're simply responding to negative reports and opinions expressed by others.

Lynn Rogers
Springdale, Arkansas

A Picture's Worth

The picture that opens the "Learning" section in September's issue is outstanding. I was an elementary teacher for 30 years, and that picture brought back fond memories. In it, I see youthful joy, exuberance, friendship, sharing, secrets perhaps, and more. I've been most fortunate to witness many examples of our fine upcoming youth, and they are something to be proud of.

If you do nothing else, please include one such picture each issue to keep our spirits up, to remind us of why we are teachers.

Frank Shaw
El Granada, California

Bottom Line

Thanks for your new feature "The Bottom Line." After I read the September issue, I cut out the "Bottom Line" items and consolidated them on two pages so I can keep them handy. Keep it coming.

Dianne Jones
Anchorage, Alaska

Just the Facts

Teacher Peter Greene says NEA refuses to acknowledge its "role as defender of mediocrity" (Letters, September). But school board members and school administrators hire and evaluate teachers—not the NEA. If there are poor teachers, it's because administrators lack the courage and professionalism to use their own policies and procedures to fire the bad apples.

NEA simply defends the right of all of its members to due process so they won't be disciplined or fired without just cause.

John Scripp
Palm Coast, Florida

"If they've been 'Throwing money at schools,' they certainly have been missing this place."

Dave Carpenter

Yellowed Journalism?

I took a critical look at the cartoon on the humor page ("In the Light Lane," September), and I wasn't laughing. There was a manual typewriter on a nearby table, plus a rotary telephone on the principal's nearly empty desk. Given how hard educators are working to bring technology to schools, this cartoon was an insult. Was it pulled from a 1966 file? Please screen all illustrations more diligently in the future.

Barbara Burgess
Rhodes, Iowa

Dangerous Advice

As an NEA member and past president of the National Coalition for Seat Belts on School Buses, I was deeply distressed by your article on school bus safety (Health, September).

Your expert, Angela Mickalide, says that school bus seat belts could prevent a child from being able to escape if caught in a fire or rollover. That's unfounded.

Fires occur in less than one half of 1 percent of all motor vehicle accidents. In the event of a rollover, seat belts prevent children from becoming human missiles violently thrown from their seats. With seat belts, children have a greater chance of remaining conscious after a rollover and evacuating the bus without assistance.

Furthermore, Mickalide's statement that most *injuries* occur when children are boarding or exiting the bus is inaccurate. Most *fatalities* occur when children are boarding or exiting the bus. Most injuries occur while kids are on board.

Laura Schwartz
Evanston, Illinois

Let's face facts: The biggest force deterring the installation of seat belts in school buses is not safety—it's cost.

Jeff Thomas
Dallastown, Pennsylvania

Not Funny

The cartoon showing an overweight man using a remote control (Letters, September) is a great example of insensitivity to the overweight population. Recently, a boy who was about to enter seventh grade killed himself rather than face taunts from kids about his

A Letter From: Cobb County, Georgia

It Helps To Have Friends in High Places

I've been a suburban Atlanta school teacher for 18 years. I'm feeling good about that now, but that hasn't always been the case.

In years gone by, I got a bit uncomfortable when conversation turned to public education in the South. I was defensive when others rattled off statistics on test scores, teacher pay, or per pupil expenditures.

I said it was our Southern agrarian roots that gave education low priority. I acknowledged that the way we'd historically handled our racial differences continued to plague our public schools.

I was embarrassed to admit to my NEA colleagues around the country that public school employees in Georgia don't have the right to bargain salary and benefits. I only whispered the truth to incredulous teachers in New Jersey or Michigan: Each year, most Georgia teachers sign a blank contract with no salary figure in it two months before the adoption of the school budget!

In 1990, Georgians elected Zell Miller governor, and teachers' lives here began to change. You see, education is Zell Miller's top priority—in word *and* deed.

- He promised to raise Georgia teacher salaries to the national average. In the last three years, we've gotten raises totalling 17 percent—an additional 12 percent is in the works.

I now make more than the average teacher in the United States. My husband, who also works in public education, and I can afford a four-bedroom home with an in-ground pool. I never would have thought that possible.

- Governor Miller promised us a lottery—and, in 1992, he delivered. The lottery now funds pre-kindergarten for any four-year-old in the state, money for computers in every classroom, a satellite dish for every school, and a scholarship program that's changing thousands of lives.

The HOPE (Helping Outstanding Pupils Educationally) Scholarship provides students who maintain a *B* average free tuition to any Georgia public vo-tech school, college, or university. Now I tell my students, "You can be anything you want to be"—and I mean it.

- Governor Miller pushed the state to shift funds from the central office to the classroom. Superintendents balked, but classroom teachers held their heads up high.

When some local school systems threatened to use promised teacher raises to balance their budgets, teachers balked. With our newfound pride, we stormed board meetings around the state. In my district, 900 teachers attended a public hearing—and the school system backed down.

- Once we learned that collective action produces results, there was no stopping us. To gain input into budget and policy decisions, we got active in school board elections. We've won two so far this year.

The tide has definitely turned for us in Georgia. We have Association members in public charter schools working toward visions they crafted themselves. We have an incentive program that provides $2,000 to each teacher who works to meet a school's set goals. We even have a one-time 5 percent pay increase for any teacher who earns national certification.

Next summer, Atlanta will host the NEA Representative Assembly. I'm eager to show off my city and let my NEA colleagues watch as Georgia asserts its place in the forefront of public school reform. I am a Georgia teacher, and I am proud.

Janet Kelley is a first grade teacher and president of the Cobb County Association of Educators.

weight. As educators, we strive to teach children, not make fun of those who are different. Let's lead by example.

D. Wagner
Palmdale, California

Four Times Four

Allow me to defend 4x4 block scheduling from attack (Letters, September). At Pulaski County High School, we've begun our fourth year using 4x4 scheduling, and we've seen tremendous success. Grades, attendance, and test scores are up significantly, the dropout rate is down, and our fine arts programs are still state contenders.

Surveys of parents, students, and teachers show overwhelming support. Only eight out of 112 teaching faculty expressed a desire to return to the seven-period day. Short of a pay raise, where else have you seen that kind of agreement among public high school teachers?

The 4x4 schedule is not a panacea. It is just one more tool that—when used correctly—can work to our advantage. We welcome inquiries about how we've been able to do it right. Write to Pulaski County High School, 5414 Cougar Trail, Dublin, VA 24084.

Frank Kasik III
Dublin, Virginia

Zero Plus Zero

I've got a zero to add to your list (Heroes & Zeroes, September).

An article, "25 Hot Careers for Women" in *Working Woman* magazine's July/August issue, includes this quip: "Ambitious teachers can take the next step into administrative jobs, where pay and status are higher."

I didn't realize that those of us who don't aspire to be in administration lack ambition. Obviously, the staff at *Working Woman* has little regard for the people who teach the children.

You can direct your comments to *Working Woman*, 230 Park Ave., New York, NY 10169.

Noel Ferguson
Cassville, Wisconsin

More Runners

Your article "He Didn't Run Alone" (Beyond the Call, September) was wonderful, but I'm a little disappointed in the last paragraph. No teachers from North Carolina were recognized. I know for a fact that there was a least one who carried the Olympic torch—me.

Mary Lou Mackintosh
Lillington, North Carolina

Editor's note: We'd also like to recognize Jennifer Lavin of Lodi, New Jersey, Kevin Foley of Dublin, Ohio, and any other NEA members who carried the torch but weren't mentioned in our article.

What About Shop?

One of America's oldest curriculums is changing dramatically, and I've seen little mention of it. The "shop" curriculum—which gave students who weren't going to college some entry-level job skills—is being replaced by technology education, a bold effort to prepare *all* of today's students for today's technological society.

Technology education teachers look beyond print shop and small engine repair to fiber optics, desktop publishing, and airplane design. Our lesson plans are activity-based, hone problem-solving skills, and challenge teens to work in cooperative groups. We're already doing the hands-on, reality-based work our critics are calling for.

I urge NEA members to talk with your technology educator or contact the International Technology Education Association—and see what you may be missing.

Rob Weisbach
Indianapolis, Indiana

Feeling Better, Thanks

I cannot thank New Jersey school secretary Catherine Coletta enough. While reading the special issue of *NEA Today* for education support personnel (September), I saw the interview with Coletta about the indoor air quality problems at her facility.

For the past nine years, we've been in enclosed offices without windows. We have all been complaining about dryness in our noses and throats. Just recently, we've seen spider beetles.

We notified the board many times of our complaints. They've done testing, hired exterminators, changed filters—all to no avail.

I clipped the *NEA Today* article—with the part about chemical washing underlined—and sent it to the board. When board members saw the same complaints we've been making in print, they were moved to act. They got the job done within two weeks.

We all feel much better—and the thanks goes to you.

Mary Lou Martuscelli
Neptune, New Jersey

Let's Talk

Share your ideas, comments, and opinions with *NEA Today* in one of five ways:

- ✔ By mail: Write to Letters, *NEA Today*, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036.
- ✔ By FAX: 202/822-7206.
- ✔ By phone: 202/822-7201.
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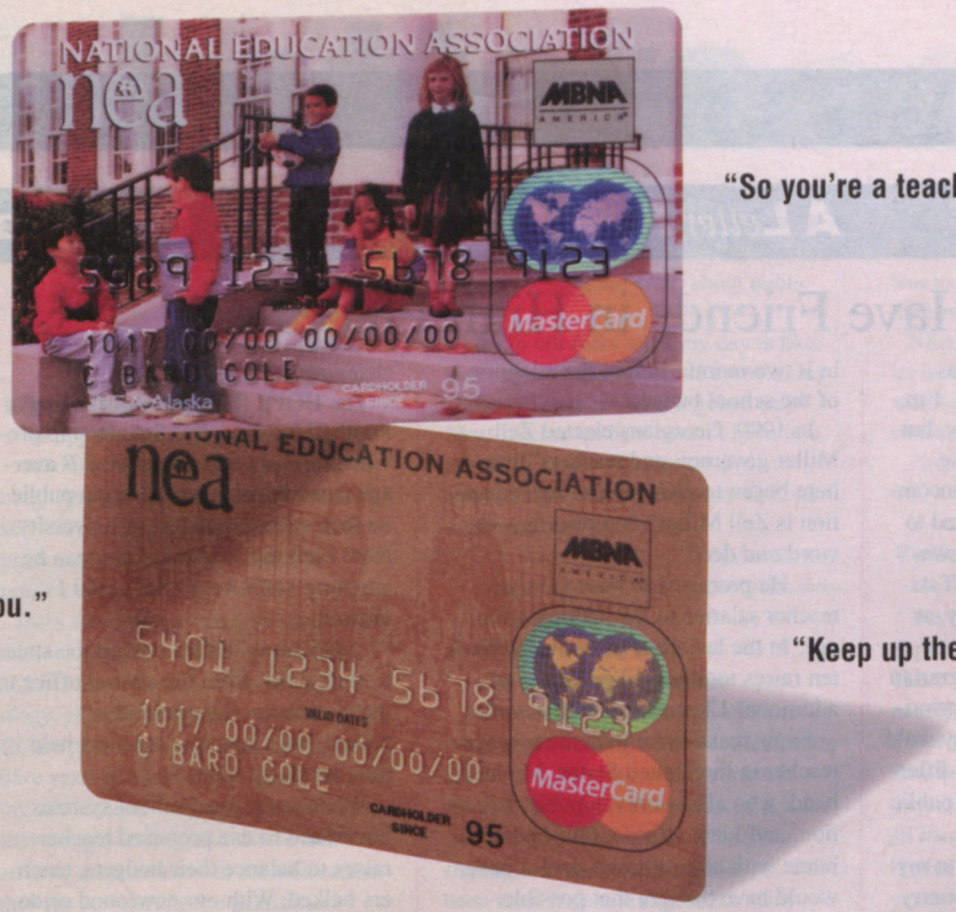
- ✔ By E-mail. Write to NEAToday@aol.com.

Letters are edited for length and clarity.

"You've got the most important job in the world."

"So you're a teacher. That's great."

"I admire what you do."



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"Keep up the good work."

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